

YALE CLASSICAL STUDIES 38



RELIGION, SOCIETY
AND CULTURE
AT DURA-EUROPOS

Edited by Ted Kaizer

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Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos

This volume advances our understanding of the religion, society and culture of Dura-Europos, the small town on the Euphrates known since the 1930s as the ‘Pompeii of the Syrian desert’. Several features make the site what is potentially our best source for day-to-day life in a small town situated on the periphery of the Roman world: inscriptions and graffiti in ten ancient languages; sculptures and frescoes combining elements of Classical and Oriental art; the most important papyrological dossier of any military unit in the Roman world; documents relating to the local economy; over a dozen pagan sanctuaries, plus a famously painted synagogue and the earliest Christian house church, all set in a gridiron city plan and surrounded by well-preserved fortifications. Dura’s unique findings facilitate the study of life in a provincial small town to a degree that archaeology and history do not usually allow.

TED KAIZER is Reader in Roman Culture and History in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Durham University. He is the author of *The Religious Life of Palmyra* (2002) and has written many articles on various aspects of religion and history of the Classical Levant.

YALE CLASSICAL STUDIES



VOLUME XXXVIII

RELIGION, SOCIETY AND
CULTURE AT DURA-EUROPOS

Edited for the Department of Classics by

TED KAIZER

University of Durham



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Preface

In the final stages of the editorial process the ruins of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates plateau at Salihyeh had already undergone major damage in the context of the tragedies that have been unfolding in Syria since 2011. By the time this volume was getting ready to go into production, the ruins were still suffering further losses, especially through very heavy looting. Though individual contributors to this volume may have been tempted to update their final text in the light of this, it has been decided that the recent and ongoing destruction would not be reflected throughout this volume.

Acknowledgements

Most of the papers originated from the colloquium 'Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos' held at the Department of Classics and Ancient History, Durham University, on 19–20 December 2008, under the auspices of the Durham Centre for the Study of the Ancient Mediterranean and the Near East (CAMNE). However, this volume cannot be said to present proceedings as such, since some contributors fundamentally changed the scope (or even the subject) of their paper (Jacqueline Austin, Jen Baird, Lucinda Dirven and Susan B. Downey), and some papers were especially commissioned for the publication (Lisa R. Brody and Leonardo Gregoratti). The colloquium paper by Simon James, a report on the military base of Dura-Europos, formed work in progress towards his forthcoming monograph *The Roman Military Base at Dura-Europos: An Archaeological Visualisation* and is therefore not included here. My own paper, on Dura-Europos under Roman rule, had been promised for publication elsewhere.

The colloquium was generously funded by CAMNE, by the Syrian Embassy at London, by the Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust (London) and by the Department of Classics and Ancient History and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Durham University. Accommodation was provided at St Chad's College, Durham. I am grateful to Abir Jarf, then Cultural Counsellor of the Syrian Embassy, for opening the colloquium, and also to my colleague Johannes Haubold, founding father and then director of CAMNE, for extending a warm welcome on behalf of the Centre and for his support in general. Thanks are further due to Francesca Mazzilli and Rik van Wijlick for their assistance at the time of the colloquium, and to Leonardo Gregoratti and Maura Heyn for their help in the later stages. I owe a great thank you especially to Peter Alpass for improving the English of some of the papers.

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Abbreviations

AAS	<i>Annales Archéologiques de Syrie</i>
AAAS	<i>Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes</i>
AÉ	<i>Année épigraphique</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJPh	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
ANRW	H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (Berlin, 1972–)
AnTard	<i>Antiquité tardive</i>
AntJ	<i>The Antiquaries Journal</i>
AUB(class)	<i>Annales Universitatis Budapestinensis de Rolando Eotvos nominatae</i>
BAI	<i>Bulletin of the Asia Institute</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellénique</i>
BJ	<i>Bonner Jahrbücher</i>
ChLA	A. Bruckner, R. Marichal et al., <i>Chartae Latinae Antiquiores: Facsimile Edition of the Latin Charters Prior to the Ninth Century</i> (Basel, Dietikon – Zurich, 1953–)
CIMRM	M. Vermaseren, <i>Corpus inscriptionum et monumentorum religionis mithriacae</i> I–II (The Hague, 1956–60)
CIS	<i>Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum</i> (ed. J.-B. Chabot). Pars secunda. Tomus III: <i>Inscriptiones palmyrenae</i> (Paris, 1926–47)
CLA	E. A. Lowe (ed.), <i>Codices latini antiquiores</i> (Oxford, 1934–)
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions</i>
DEÉ	P. Leriche et al. (eds), <i>Doura-Europos: Études</i>

- [I] 1983–4, in *Syria* 63 (1986), 1–155
- [II] 1986–7, in *Syria* 65 (1988), 259–382
- [III] 1988–90, in *Syria* 69 (1992), 1–151
- IV 1991–3 (Beirut, 1997). Eds P. Leriche and M. Gelin
- V 1994–7 (Damascus, 2004 [2007]). Eds P. Leriche, M. Gelin and A. Dandrau

DNP	<i>Der Neue Pauly</i>
EA	<i>Epigraphica Anatolica</i>
EDV	P. Leriche, G. Coqueugniot and S. De Pontbriand, <i>Europos-Doura: Varia</i> • I (Beirut, 2012)
GGM	C. Müller (ed.), <i>Geographi graeci minores</i> I–II (Paris, 1855–61)
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HThR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ID	F. Durrbach and P. Roussel, <i>Inscriptions de Délos</i> (Paris, 1935–7)
IGLS	L. Jalabert, R. Mouterde et al, <i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i> (Paris, 1929–)
I. Nécropole	J.-P. Rey-Coquais, <i>Inscriptions grecques et latines découvertes dans les fouilles de Tyr</i> (1963–1974) I. <i>Inscriptions de la nécropole</i> (Paris, 1977)
Inv.	<i>Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre</i> , I–IX ed. J. Cantineau (Beirut, 1930–6); X ed. J. Starcky (Damascus, 1949); XI ed. J. Teixidor (Beirut, 1965); XII (Damascus, 1975)
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JThS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAI	H. Donner and W. Röllig, <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> I–III ³ (Wiesbaden, 1972–6)
MBAH	<i>Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte</i>
MDAI(R)	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts, Roemische Abteilung</i>
MedAnt	<i>Mediterraneo antico: Economia, società, cultura</i>
MÉFRA	<i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École française de Rome</i>
MUSJ	<i>Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph</i>
PAT	D. R. Hillers and E. Cussini, <i>Palmyrene Aramaic Texts</i> (Baltimore – London, 1996)
P. Dura	Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959)
P. Euphr.	D. Feissel and J. Gascou, 'Documents d'archives romains inédits du Moyen Euphrate (III ^e s. après J.-C.) I' in <i>Journal des Savants</i> (1995), 65–119; 'II' in (1997), 3–57 (with J. Teixidor); 'III' in (2000), 157–208

- PSI *Papiri Greci e Latini: Pubblicazioni della Società italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto* (Florence, 1912–)
- RB *Revue biblique*
- Rep. I, II, etc. M. I. Rostovtzeff et al. (eds), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Preliminary Reports I–IX* (New Haven, 1929–52)
- I: *Preliminary Report of First Season of Work, Spring 1928*. Eds P. V. C. Baur and M. I. Rostovtzeff (1929)
 - II: ... *of Second Season of Work, October 1928 – April 1929*. Eds P. V. C. Baur and M. I. Rostovtzeff (1931)
 - III: ... *of Third Season of Work, November 1929 – March 1930*. Eds. P. V. C. Baur, M. I. Rostovtzeff and A. R. Bellinger (1932)
 - IV: ... *of Fourth Season of Work, October 1930 – March 1931*. Eds. P. V. C. Baur, M. I. Rostovtzeff and A. R. Bellinger (1933)
 - V: ... *of Fifth Season of Work, October 1931 – March 1932*. Ed. M. I. Rostovtzeff (1934)
 - VI: ... *of Sixth Season of Work, October 1932 – March 1933*. Eds M. I. Rostovtzeff, A. R. Bellinger, C. Hopkins and C. B. Welles (1936).
 - VII–VIII: ... *of the Seventh and Eighth Seasons of Work, 1933–1934 and 1934–1935*. Eds M. I. Rostovtzeff, F. E. Brown and C. B. Welles (1939)
 - IX.1–3: ... *of the Ninth Season of Work, 1935–1936*. Eds M. I. Rostovtzeff, A. R. Bellinger, F. E. Brown and C. B. Welles (1944–52)
 - 1: Part I: *The Agora and Bazaar* (1944)
 - 2: Part II: N. P. Toll, *The Necropolis* (1946)
 - 3: Part III: *The Palace of the Dux Ripae and the Dolicheneum* (1952)
- RE G. Wissowa et al. (eds), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart)
- RÉS *Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique I–VIII*, eds C. Clermont-Ganneau and J. B. Chabot (Paris, 1900–68)
- RFIC *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica*
- RHR *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*

RSP	M. Gawlikowski, <i>Recueil d'inscriptions palmyréniennes provenant de fouilles syriennes et polonaises récentes à Palmyre</i> (Paris, 1974)
SEG	<i>Supplementum epigraphicum graecum</i>
TAPA	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
TMMM	F. Cumont, <i>Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra</i> I–II (Brussels, 1896–9)
TUAT NF	<i>Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Neue Folge</i> (Gütersloh, 2003–)
WVDOG	<i>Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft</i>
YCS	<i>Yale Classical Studies</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

TED KAIZER

The small fortress town of Dura-Europos is known, since the great Russian scholar Mikhaïl Rostovtzeff, as the ‘Pompeii of the Syrian desert’.¹ Situated on the Middle Euphrates river, it was founded as a Macedonian colony by one of the successors to Alexander the Great. Towards the end of the second century BC, Dura-Europos came under Parthian control and is thought to have remained so – with a brief interruption during Trajan’s Parthian war – until it passed definitely under Roman rule in AD 165.² Nearly a century later, in ca. AD 256, the defending Roman forces were defeated following a gruesome siege by the Sasanian army of Shapur I, who destroyed the town and left it to disappear under the sand.³ By the time the emperor Julian the Apostate passed by the area during his ill-fated Persian campaign in the early 360s, Dura had long been deserted.⁴

¹ The phrase appears as the title of an article (‘la Pompei del deserto siriano’) in Rostovtzeff (1937). Cf. id. (1938a) 2–5. But see already id. (1927) 837, in a review of F. Cumont’s monograph: ‘I should not say that Doura is a Syrian Pompeii. Pompeii is unique and no other place can vie with Pompeii. However, in some respects Doura is a Syrian Pompeii. Like Pompeii it is primarily a Hellenistic city. Like Pompeii it shows the gradual absorption and modification of Hellenistic civilization by a non-Greek population.’ Cumont took over the label in his correspondence with Rostovtzeff, in letters written from Rome on 29 October 1937 and 11 November 1938. Cf. Bongard-Levine et al. (2007) nos 129 and 140. Cf. now Baird (2014) 26, who argued that the phrase might have been ‘useful for publicity purposes’ but was otherwise ‘profoundly misleading’.

² On the Parthian phase, cf. Millar (1993) 445–52, and id. (1998b), and now also the contribution to this volume by L. Gregoratti; for the Roman period, cf. Millar (1993) 467–71, and Kaizer (2015).

³ For discussions of the date, cf. James (1985) and MacDonald (1986). James (2009–10) gives a convincing and graphic description, accompanied by clear and evocative illustrations, of the ‘chemical warfare’ that he argues must have taken place in one of the narrow tunnels dug under the wall. Cf. id. (2011a) and (2011b). Wahls (2007) 101 put forward the hypothesis of a ‘Weiter-’ or ‘Wiederbesiedlung’ (‘resettlement’) of Dura-Europos following its capture by the neo-Persians. Cf. now esp. Baird (2012b).

⁴ Amm. Marc. 23.5.8 and 24.1.5.

The History of the Exploration of Dura-Europos

Before it had been identified as the town that Isidorus of Charax lists in his *Parthian Stations* as ‘Dura, city of Nikanor, a foundation of the Macedonians, called Europos by the Greeks’,⁵ the ruins at Salihyeh had been briefly noted in two late nineteenth-century travel reports, first by Engineer Josef Černík and then by John Punnett Peters, the Director of the University of Pennsylvania Expedition to Babylonia, in whose time the site was known under the Turkish name of Kan Kalessi, ‘Bloody Castle’.⁶ A lengthy description of ‘die namenlose Stadt’ then followed as the fruit of four visits, between 1898 and 1912, by the team of Ernst Herzfeld, Friedrich Sarre and Bruno Schulz, but still no proper exploration took place.⁷ This would finally change when British troops, camped at the ruins in March 1920, discovered the first fresco in what later came to be known as the temple ‘of the Palmyrene gods’. James Henry Breasted, the leading Orientalist scholar from the University of Chicago who by chance had just returned to Syria towards the end of April from an expedition to the Upper Tigris river, was instantly asked to undertake a mission to Salihyeh in order to examine the newly revealed paintings. Only five days later Breasted was on his way, with seven cars from the British Army and Civil Government. In the time frame of merely one day, he cleared the main mural, a large sacrificial scene now known as the Konon fresco [PLATE XIV], and found another painting in the adjacent room [PLATE II], with an accompanying inscription that enabled him to identify the ruins as those of Dura.⁸

Breasted’s report to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres in Paris, in July 1922,⁹ aroused such enthusiasm that the Academy decided to

⁵ Isid. Char. *Mans. Parth.* 1: Δοῦρα, Νικάνορος πόλις, κτίσμα Μακεδόνων ὑπὸ δὲ Ἑλλήνων Εὐρώπῳ καλεῖται.

⁶ Von Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (1875) 17–8, and Peters (1897) 131–5.

⁷ E. Herzfeld, in Sarre and Herzfeld (1920) 386–95.

⁸ The dangerous conditions in which Breasted and his team had to work in what was in fact a war zone are brilliantly evoked in the classic report on the mission, Breasted (1924), the first volume of the new series *Publications by the Chicago Oriental Institute*. See now also Emberling and Teeter (2010), in a volume accompanying a recent exhibition at the Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago (12 January–29 August 2010) esp. 66–70. *Ibid.* 71, fig. 4.59, the famous colourised image of the Konon fresco (showing Breasted on the right in front of the fresco) is accompanied by the hitherto unknown original photograph behind the image, at fig. 4.58, which shows not only Breasted, but also a ‘turbaned figure’, probably a local workman, who was painted out in the colourised photo. Note that the subscript to the original photo (4.58) blunders by mixing up the mural with the equally famous fresco ‘showing the Roman tribune Julius Terentius offering incense to local gods’, which is of course the painting in the adjacent room (to which I refer in the main text)!

⁹ Breasted (1922a). Cf. id. (1922b), which includes an additional note by F. Cumont, who had been shown the photos from Salihyeh during an earlier visit to America.

send their ‘associé étranger’ Franz Cumont to Salihiyeh under the protection of French troops provided by General Gouraud in Beirut. Cumont spent two brief periods at the site: eleven days in November 1922 and just over a month one year later, resulting in two classic tomes (‘texte’ and ‘atlas’) of *Fouilles de Doura-Europos* that lie at the basis of all further scholarly investigation.¹⁰ He continued to work in the building with the frescoes discovered by the British troops and excavated also elsewhere in the city, finding among other things Dura’s Greek name, Europos, in a parchment. In a review of the book, Rostovtzeff expressed the hope that archaeological work could continue soon and that an affluent individual or institution recognising the value of the early finds would come forward to fund it.¹¹ His own university, with a major grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, eventually answered the call, and ten now legendary seasons of campaigns jointly undertaken by Yale and the French Academy followed from 1928 onwards. Together Rostovtzeff and Cumont, who both arrived at the site on 14 April of that year for the official opening of the excavations, acted as the enterprise’s scientific directors, with the field directorship filled respectively by Maurice Pillet for the first four seasons, then by Clark Hopkins during the years of greatest discoveries, and finally by Frank Brown for the last two spells.¹² But with the supply of funding discontinued in 1937, in the context of the threatening world crisis leading up to the Second World War,¹³ and with the waning powers of the Russian and Belgian giants who

¹⁰ Cumont (1926). In 1924, the political situation had deteriorated such that only a handful of French soldiers continued to excavate, but without proper archaeological supervision. A brief report by Lieutenant Delaplanche is included in *ibid.* 477–81. I am currently preparing historiographical introductions to the two forthcoming volumes on Dura-Europos in the *Bibliotheca Cumontiana* of the Academia Belgica and the Belgian Historical Institute in Rome: *Scripta Maiora* XI (series editor: Corinne Bonnet), the republication of Cumont (1926), and *Scripta Minora* VII (series editor: Danny Praet), a collection of his ca. fifty articles, notes and reviews on the site.

¹¹ Rostovtzeff (1927) 841. In a letter written on 14 February 1927, Cumont had asked Rostovtzeff to emphasise precisely this: ‘Vous me rendriez service si vous en disiez quelques mots dans une revue américaine et peut-être sera-ce pour vous une occasion d’insister sur la nécessité de poursuivre les fouilles’ (‘You would render me a great service if you were to write a few words about it in an American journal and perhaps this could provide an opportunity to insist on the necessity to continue the excavations’). Cf. Bongard-Levine et al. (2007) no. 12.

¹² The so-called ‘preliminary reports’ (*Rep.*) are in fact so much more than just that. The tenth, final season was never properly published, but see Matheson (1992) and ead. (1993). Only a number of the originally planned ‘final reports’ saw the light of day, but a badly needed volume on the epigraphic material is not amongst them. Hopkins (1979) presents the often captivating history of the site’s discovery during these years, obviously with most emphasis on, and the most enjoyable insight stories from, those seasons in which he participated himself, either as assistant to Pillet or as field director.

¹³ Movingly illustrated by the later part of the correspondence between Cumont and Rostovtzeff, cf. Bongard-Levine et al. (2007).

had come to embody the exploration of the Euphrates fortress,¹⁴ the golden years of Dura-Europos seemed to have gone forever.

In more recent years, however, the site has been ‘rediscovered’. Since the early 1980s, and until the start of the current unrest in Syria, it has been the subject of further archaeological exploration by the Mission Franco-Syrienne d’Europos-Doura (MFSed), headed by Pierre Leriche, who not only initiated new excavations but also, even more importantly, focused his team’s efforts on issues concerning analysis, survey and conservation (on which see also below).¹⁵

Dura-Europos: Towards a Case-Study of ‘Small Town History’

Several features coincide to make Dura-Europos into what is potentially our best source for day-to-day life in a small town situated in the periphery of the Graeco-Roman world. Inscriptions and graffiti combined with parchments and papyri have revealed at least ten ancient languages and dialects used in the town. Regardless of whether these were employed regularly or only occasionally, the linguistic variety is of course truly phenomenal. In addition to Greek (the dominant language in public documents) and Latin (above all associated with the imperial forces stationed at the site in the later phase), several Aramaic dialects are attested (including Palmyrenean, Hatrean and Syriac), from the synagogue comes testimony in Hebrew, Parthian and Middle-Persian, and throughout the town shreds of the North Arabian dialect known as Safaitic were found.¹⁶ As regards the papyri, they include one of the most important dossiers of any military unit in the Roman world, connected as they are above all to the activities of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*.¹⁷ Amongst the Dura

¹⁴ Cumont died in 1947; Rostovtzeff, who in a letter to C. B. Welles from 8 October 1946 (Bongard-Levine et al. (2007) 341, no. 22) complained to have become ‘a burden to everybody and a relief and support to nobody’, died in 1952.

¹⁵ Thus far, five volumes of *Dura-Europos: Études* have appeared, with the sixth volume published as *Europos-Doura: Varia*. The mission has been re-baptised as the Mission Franco-Syrienne d’Europos-Doura. Separate mention may be made of the work carried out in the temple of Zeus Megistos by S. B. Downey (most recently Downey (2012)) and the British Academy-funded survey, spearheaded by S. James, of the Roman military base and the adjacent areas of the town, both undertaken under the hospitable umbrella of the Mission Franco-Syrienne.

¹⁶ Cf. Kaizer (2009a) and Gascou (2011) for an overview and discussion.

¹⁷ The papyri are collected in a Final Report by Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959). On the cohort, cf. Kennedy (1994).

papyri, the most famous one will no doubt be the so-called *Feriale Dura-num*, whose traditional interpretation as a *military* calendar has recently come under scholarly scrutiny.¹⁸ The documents from Dura are now supplemented by a hoard of papyri whose exact provenance is uncertain (although they certainly originate from the Middle Euphrates), appearing on the antiquarian market in the 1980s.¹⁹ Together they contain valuable information about the army's social activities, such as the purchasing of land by veterans or the sales of slaves by officers. The precise effects, however, of the military presence on the local and regional societies, and the exact degree of the soldiers' interaction with the civic component of Dura's population, is not always straightforward and remains the subject of intense debate.²⁰ As regards the economic life of Dura-Europos, it had long been assumed, since the days of Cumont, that the town had been in the first place a station in the long-distance trade due to its functioning as a connection point between Palmyra and the Persian Gulf. This view has been substantially adjusted in recent years, and more emphasis has been placed on the fact that many documents relate to the town's local economy.²¹

In addition, the countless sculptures and frescoes from Dura-Europos, among which are those that put the town under the spotlight of attention from scholars and the larger public alike, play their role in the ongoing debate on how best to characterise, and to understand, the prevalent form(s) of art in the Near Eastern frontier zone, especially popular (besides at Dura) at Hatra in the North-Mesopotamian Jazirah region and at Palmyra in the centre of the Syrian steppe, where it also developed into unique visual cultures. The particular artefacts from Dura similarly combine elements of Classical and Oriental spheres of influence, and the available material from the town is therefore of key importance to assess the 'nature

¹⁸ The *Feriale Duranum* is Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) no. 54. Reeves (2004) has now questioned the long-established understanding of the document and proposes to view it as a festival list presented to Dura-Europos when the town was granted the status of a Roman *colonia*. Most recently on the calendar, cf. Gros Lambert (2009); Lozano Gómez (2014).

¹⁹ The dossier from the Middle Euphrates is published by Feissel and Gascou (1995), (1997) – with Teixidor – and (2000). For discussion, cf. Gascou (1999), Gnoli (2000) and Mazza (2007). For the wider context, cf. Mazza (1992), and on the historical geography of the region cf. Gaborit and Leriche (1998).

²⁰ Dąbrowa (1981), Stoll (2001) and Pollard (2000), the latter arguing that the presence of the army in the Near Eastern provinces resulted more in exploitation than in investment. Cf. Gnoli (2007) and Edwell (2008).

²¹ Dirven (1996) and ead. (1999) 34–40. Cf. *ibid.* 6–8 and 15–7, on Dura's local economy. Cf. esp. the contribution to this volume by K. Ruffing, with references to his many earlier publications on the subject.

of Syrian hellenism.²² Naturally linked with the sculpture,²³ it is probably above all the sheer amount of religious buildings (and the multifarious material linked with the respective cults that took place there) that allows an above average appreciation of the everyday life in an ancient small town:²⁴ more than a dozen pagan sanctuaries, including a mithraeum,²⁵ plus a famously painted synagogue and the earliest Christian house church, were all set in a rigorously gridiron pattern, surrounded by well-preserved fortifications [PLATE I].²⁶

Like Pompeii, its counterpart in the centre of the Roman world, the relevance of Dura-Europos for modern scholarship does not mirror the town's actual importance in the ancient world. Its marvellous findings facilitate the study of life in an ancient small town to a degree that archaeology and history do not usually allow. But unlike Pompeii, Dura-Europos has – primarily due to the presence of so many non-Classical languages, of the so-called 'Parthian art' and of the indigenous style of buildings – often been considered by modern historians of the Graeco-Roman world as 'exotic' and therefore peripheral to the study of Classical antiquity. Academic *and* public interest in the site has, above all, traditionally gone to the unique wall paintings from the synagogue,²⁷ and to a lesser degree to those from the church,²⁸ which are both absent from the current volume.²⁹ It is to be

²² The latter is the title of Sartre (2008). The numerous terracotta figurines, on the other hand, point to a culture much closer to that of ancient Mesopotamia than to that of the Graeco-Roman world, cf. Downey (2003). The debate on the so-called 'Parthian art', now widely acknowledged to be a misnomer, goes back to Rostovtzeff (1935). Cf. Drijvers (1990); Mathiesen (1992) I 78–80, and II nos 168–95. For a comprehensive catalogue and accompanying discussion, cf. Downey (1977) and now especially the contribution to this volume by L. Dirven. Cf. now also the recent edited volume on the subject, Jacobs (2014), esp. Hauser (2014) whose focus is on Hatra and Palmyra.

²³ Downey (2008).

²⁴ Cf. Kaizer (2009b), serving as a *Vorstudien* to what I hope will become a monograph on the subject. Cf. now Duchâteau (2013), with a focus on the 'personalities and identities' of the deities attested at the site.

²⁵ On which see now the contribution to this volume by T. Gnoli, and also Dirven and McCarty (2014).

²⁶ The most recent and accurate plan of the site, of the MFSED, has now been drawn by S. de Pontbriand, P. Leriche and H. David. Cf. Luciani and Boschiero (2010) 85, ill. 6. It is available separately as a 'plan guide du visiteur'.

²⁷ Cf. the classic volume by Kraeling (1956); cf. Goodenough (1964).

²⁸ Kraeling (1967).

²⁹ Though the bibliographies on both buildings (and their communities) are too long to do them justice here, the following studies deserve separate mention. On the synagogue (with our only surviving murals rather than mosaics), cf. Fine (2011), Noy (2007), Sommer (2006b), Stern (2010), ead. (2012), Weitzmann and Kessler (1990). On the church (whose status as the oldest surviving Christian liturgical space cannot be emphasised enough), cf. Korol with Stanke (2009), Korol with Rieckesmann (2011), Mell (2010), Pagoulatos (2007), Peppard (2012).

hoped that the papers in this collection will contribute to further appreciation of the fact that the stronghold on the Middle Euphrates would still be amongst our best test cases for many more aspects of the society and culture of a relatively minor locality situated on the fringes of the empire.

This Volume and Its Contributions

It will be obvious that this volume is not an attempt at a comprehensive overview of all aspects of religion, society and culture at Dura-Europos. Instead it presents a series of case studies on individual aspects, and in this context it should be emphasised at the outset that as editor I have not attempted to enforce conformity throughout this tome beyond format. Possible disagreements amongst individual contributors to the volume, and indeed with views held by the editor (or vice versa), ought not to be considered as detrimental to this project; they rather illustrate that the study of Dura-Europos can advance successfully only in the context of constructive and open-minded debate. Thus, the building that was first discovered can be referred to according to the conventional scholarly labelling as either the temple ‘of the Palmyrene gods’ or that ‘of Bel’, although it has been argued recently that it would be better called, at least for the Parthian period, temple ‘of Zeus’;³⁰ as regards the fresco of the tribune Julius Terentius, some contributors would still leave the option open that the recipients of the depicted sacrifice were emperors, despite the editor’s own strong conviction that these figures must necessarily be Palmyrene gods;³¹ others may adhere more to some of the traditional scholarly reconstructions of frescoes than might now be considered desirable;³² and whereas my own preference would be to think of the Euphrates stronghold as a town rather than a city – to distinguish it from the much more monumental appearance of a Palmyra, a Hatra or a Gerasa – this has not been imposed on individual authors either.

It should be noted, however, that (with one exception) throughout this volume the ‘traditional’ place name of Dura-Europos (often abbreviated to Dura) is adhered to, and I have decided not to follow the recent proposal by the Mission Franco-Syrienne to switch to ‘Europos(-)D(o)ura’ instead

³⁰ Independently argued by Millar (1998b) 482, and Dirven (1999) 293–5. Even more neutrally, it could be referred to as the temple ‘just north of block J3/5’ or, following the most recent map, the temple ‘in block J9’, cf. Luciani and Boschiero (2010) 85, ill. 6. Cf. most recently Kaizer (2016).

³¹ Kaizer (2006). On the fresco, cf. now also Dirven (2007); Heyn (2011).

³² Cf. the important warnings given in the contribution by S. B. Downey to this volume.

(though I hasten to add that I speak for myself on this point and not necessarily for all contributors).³³ The Seleucid military colony of Europos, that by the end of the second century BC had developed into a town with a gridiron plan enclosed by imposing ramparts, had been founded ca. 300 BC on a plateau that seems to have been known as Dura, meaning ‘fortress’, since time immemorial, according to a cuneiform tablet reused in a wall of the temple of Atargatis that refers to the ‘district of Dawara.’³⁴ The indigenous name became especially popular again in the early third century AD, but not at the cost of the Greek name, as is shown by a divorce act from AD 254, very shortly before the Sasanian conquest: in this document, the town (which by now had become a Roman *colonia*) was officially referred to as the κολωνεία Εὐροπαίων Σελεύκου Νεικάτορος.³⁵ In the end, our labelling does not really matter: *both* ‘Dura-Europos’ *and* ‘Europos(-)Dura’ are modern hybrids. *Both* of the name’s halves were used in ancient times, often alongside each other contemporaneously. But as far as our evidence is concerned, they were only once mentioned together, namely by the above-mentioned Isidorus, who – from a Parthian perspective (he came from the Arsacid-dominated Gulf state Characene) – early in the first century AD listed the town in the first place as ‘Dura’, which he said was ‘called Europos by the Greeks’. Since both combinations are scholarly creations anyway, I have opted to carry on using the same name that has by now become widely established and considered conventional.³⁶

It should therefore perhaps be stressed that in no way does this volume aim to challenge, nor should it be seen as rivalling, the indispensable work done and published by the Mission Franco-Syrienne. Among many other matters (including surveys and analyses, and also new excavations as such), Pierre Leriche concentrated in particular on the undertaking of measures that were intended to help to preserve the site for future generations, and for this scholars (as well as the public at large) owe him a huge debt. As anyone who has visited Salihyeh can testify, its ruins are extremely vulnerable. Having travelled along the Middle Euphrates both in the late 1990s and in 2010, I was shocked to see to what degree the once empty stretch to the south of Deir ez-Zor had been built up in the meantime – not to speak of the changes that have taken place, according to the available photographs, in the area since the days of the joint mission in the 1920s and 1930s! The deal that Leriche had struck with the Syrian authorities, to have

³³ The exception is the contribution to this volume by S. B. Downey.

³⁴ Cf. Stephens (1937).

³⁵ Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) no. 32.

³⁶ Cf. now Baird (2014) 13–14 for very perceptive comments on this issue.

the immediate surroundings of Salihiyeh protected by a law that prohibits further construction work within a specified radius, was therefore of the utmost importance. Any comparison of images from the Yale campaign with those taken in recent years reveals quite how fragile the remains of Dura-Europos are. The erosion of the monuments is due in part to climatic factors, and in part to the human element. On the one hand, photos in the archives of the Yale University Art Gallery (YUAG) show, for example, how the temple of Artemis was flooded in the 1930s, similar to the state of the temple as it was when Leriche came across it in 1985.³⁷ On the other hand, tourists wandering through the mostly unsupervised ruins added to the damage by climbing the low mud-brick walls of the buildings, and any unattentive visitor who noticed a large chunk breaking off under his feet would be glad not to have Maurice Pillet around, who is said to have shown a rather unforgiving attitude to Jotham Johnson when the latter ‘with inexcusable carelessness ... broke off a fragment’ of the so-called battlement graffito, as a result of which he had ‘not been allowed to forget the incident’.³⁸ The damage that the site has undergone during the recent unrest in the region, above all through illicit excavations and plundering with a view to the black market, is too enormous, and too sad, to be described here in any detail.³⁹

A lot of exciting work is done also outside the Mission Franco-Syrienne, by established and young scholars alike, and it is to be hoped that the present collection of articles reflects some of this dynamic input into the scholarship of the subject, which does not necessarily depend on great familiarity following from site work, or even site visits. The material from the preliminary and final reports of the campaigns in the 1920s and 1930s is far from exhausted and deserves continuous reflection and re-studying. Part of this analysing work can of course only be done at Dura-Europos itself, and has indeed been done most admirably by the team of Leriche, but another part must be the responsibility for scholars from various disciplines labouring away in their libraries worldwide. This volume, then, is in the first place the result of an attempt to bring together many scholars

³⁷ According to Leriche’s photograph which was on display in the exhibition house built by the French–Syrian Mission at the site itself, but destroyed during the recent unrest. Compare Klengel (1986) 62, no. 12, a photograph showing how, on the approach from outside, Dura’s walls are partly covered by the desert sand.

³⁸ From a letter by Johnson to Rostovtzeff, sent from Dura on 6 February 1929, now preserved in the YUAG archives. On the relationship between Pillet and Johnson in general, cf. Hopkins (1979) 52 and 61.

³⁹ Reports on the damage done to the cultural heritage sites in Syria, including Dura-Europos, are regularly updated and made available online by Emma Cunliffe.

and students working on Dura-Europos, in order for them to share their understanding, questions and theories about this highly fascinating site. And it is very much hoped that, as such, it will further stimulate contacts and discussions between academics from different disciplines and backgrounds.

In contrast to most other papers in this volume, Leonardo Gregoratti's contribution focuses on the Dura-Europos of the Parthian period. He argues that this often neglected phase in the town's history can only be properly understood when it is viewed in the context of the Parthian empire as a whole. He assumes that Dura was among the 'other cities of Macedonian foundation, carrying Greek names' which Tacitus (*Ann.* 6.41) sets in sharp contrast to Parthian settlements, and he puts forward the hypothesis that a process by which these cities developed under royal Arsacid influence – from relative urban self-rule into more restricted forms of administrative power – ought to be contrasted with the situation as Tacitus describes it for the major city of Seleucia on the Tigris, where the democratic element was preserved in the light of the King of Kings' advance.

Jen Baird's paper studies dress practices at Dura-Europos. Building on the archival records from the joint campaigns by Yale and the French Academy, in which she has found many unpublished artefacts, her investigation throws light on a usually neglected but obviously essential aspect of what daily life in a provincial small town on the fringes of the Roman empire was like. The paper makes important observations about the relative spread of 'elite culture' throughout the site, and about the varying degrees of 'Greekness' and 'Romanness' that can be attested in the evidence.

The article by Michael Sommer contains two case studies, of the famous murals in the synagogue of the Jewish diaspora community of Dura-Europos and of the role of women in some of the legal documents from the Middle Euphrates region respectively. Together they show the difficulties that modern scholars encounter when trying to make sense of what went on in cultural terms. Sommer discusses the relevant arsenal of methodological apparatus – ranging from acculturation to hybridity and 'créolité' – and considers the potential value in the application of these terms to the cultural diversity detectable in the monuments and documents from the fortress town on the Euphrates.⁴⁰

Lucinda Dirven tackles the problem of Parthian art at Dura, first formulated by Rostovtzeff in his monograph-sized classic paper published in *Yale Classical Studies* from 1935. With scholars realising that the concept

⁴⁰ For a different approach, cf. now Andrade (2013) 240.

of an actual Parthian cultural centre must remain conjecture, 'Parthian art' has, in more recent years, come to be seen as a misnomer. Building on this, Dirven now pushes the argument even further, and makes the case that the alleged similarities in style (of which frontality is the one best known) shared by sculptures from Dura-Europos and other places in the region, above all Palmyra, Edessa and Hatra, have been exaggerated by scholars and should be disposed of too. Her re-evaluation of the figurative art of Dura leads her to suggest that, in the period before AD 165, the local sculpture in this small town was influenced by art not from Mesopotamia but from Palmyra, and as such underwent much more western stimulus than has commonly been assumed.

Maura K. Heyn gives a new interpretation of a fresco from the temple 'of the Palmyrene gods' that is known since Cumont as the so-called 'scène énigmatique'.⁴¹ Focussing on the gesture of the figures that are represented, she evaluates previous scholarly interpretations and puts forward a bold new hypothesis that the painting instead depicts a particular scene known from Classical mythology. 'L'interprétation de cette scène reste à trouver', Cumont wrote back in 1923,⁴² and it is to be hoped that Heyn's proposition will stimulate other scholars to rediscover this intriguing mural and to further discuss its potential reading.

Jean-Baptiste Yon looks at the role of women in the town's cults. As is well known, female names dominate the steps of the so-called 'salles à gradins' in the temples of Artemis, Atargatis and Azzanathkona, and Yon argues that this concerns only a certain trend within a limited period of time, and that the whole phenomenon ought to be interpreted within the wider context of the processes of monumentalisation that the sanctuaries underwent.

Julian Buchmann draws attention to the multiple rooms in Dura's sanctuaries that are furnished with benches and have traditionally been labelled in scholarship as 'banqueting rooms' for priests and other specific groups of local worshippers. He points to the problem that scholars have sometimes very freely handed out the tag 'temple' to these buildings and that this has seriously impacted the way in which rooms with benches are commonly understood to have functioned. Instead, their potential multi-functionality is emphasised.

Tommaso Gnoli puts forward a new interpretation of some components of the imagery on display in the mithraic 'cave', through a detailed examination of the two cult reliefs and the relevant frescoes. He takes a position

⁴¹ Cumont (1926) 84–9.

⁴² Cumont (1923a) 29; id. (1923b) 52.

against the new 'orthodoxy' adhered to by many modern scholars of mithraism, which has moved far away from the theories originally postulated by Franz Cumont, and argues that at least certain elements of the visual programme of the Dura mithraeum would better be explained by reference to an Iranian sphere of influence.

Cristina Marta Acqua investigates how Rome's empire is present in the Euphrates small town. She catalogues the various monuments and their artefacts in both the military zone and the so-called civic centre, and proposes to view the relevant spaces in the context of so-called urban paths. What stands out from her contribution is the extent to which the notional power of the emperor is entrenched in the life of his subjects on the empire's fringes, although it remains of course to be seen to what degree the affirmation of Roman authority at a site like Dura resulted from any conscious decision on the part of Rome itself, especially in those parts of the town not dominated by military personnel.

Jacqueline Austin contributes a palaeographical perspective, which has in recent years been often neglected in the study of Dura-Europos. Her case study of two Latin *dipinti* from Dura adds a number of pertinent observations to the scholarly discussion about the logistics of carving inscriptions in the Roman world, in particular about the involvement of those responsible for providing the outlines for the later engraving of texts. With regard to the military context of the town, it is emphasised that this process apparently took place without the aid of civilian clerks, and was hence taken care of 'in house'.

Loren T. Stuckenbruck focuses on the Palmyrenean-Greek inscriptions from Dura-Europos and compares them with the much more substantial corpus of bilingual inscriptions from Palmyra itself, showing how the linguistic patterns at the Euphrates stronghold with regard to bilingualism are similar to those at the caravan city situated ca. 200 km to the west. It is worth asking, however, whether 'Palmyrenean' is actually the correct label for the Aramaic inscriptions found at Dura. Of course, the link with the Palmyrene segment of Dura's population is sometimes made explicitly (when the author of the inscription identifies himself as a 'Palmyrene' or 'Tadmorene', e.g. *PAT* 1078) or implicitly (when a dedication is made to what are typically Palmyrene gods, e.g. *PAT* 1067), but most of the cases are less clear cut and perhaps too easily taken for granted. Perhaps the language and its script that are commonly viewed as being related to the Palmyrenes should, as far as the evidence from Dura-Europos is concerned, be rethought one day as a more 'regional' dialect, in use not only by Palmyrenes but also by Durenes *and* by inhabitants from the villages along the Euphrates.

Kai Ruffing asks questions about the nature of the economic life of Dura under Roman occupation, and emphasises that the town ought to be studied in the first place in the context of the Middle Euphrates region, for which it formed a main regional centre (though I would hesitate to apply the label of metropolis in this case). The sources show how varying constituent groups of Durene society were economically active, though not – as far as the evidence is concerned – in any form of long-distance trade.⁴³ Ruffing also draws attention to the important role played by the variety of Roman soldiers and veterans, from both legionary detachments and auxiliary units, in the economic situation of Dura, from direct and active involvement to a mere stimulating function with regard to their fiscal *en bloc* power.

Susan B. Downey focuses on what she labels the ‘adventurous reconstruction’ both of buildings and of frescoes by Frank Brown, field director at Dura-Europos for the final two seasons of the joint campaigns by Yale and the French Academy (1935–7). She shows how Brown’s influential interpretations – of on the one hand the citadel palace and the temple of Zeus Megistos, and on the other the paintings in the so-called temples of Adonis and of Zeus Theos – were generally based on extremely flimsy evidence, and she calls for scholarly caution not to use his reconstructions as hard evidence.

Finally, Lisa R. Brody’s contribution constitutes an appropriate epilogue to this volume. It surveys the vicissitudes of some of the most famous finds from Dura-Europos since they were brought to New Haven in the 1930s, and describes in detail the technicalities of the various conservation processes being undertaken at Yale University. Finally, she clarifies the underlying principles of the new permanent exhibition of the Dura material that has now opened in the completely refurbished YUAG, and that will – together with a number of scientific innovations – play a major role in the upgraded accessibility of the artefacts from the Euphrates town.

Dura-Europos in the Public Eye

Even if the days are long gone that A-list celebrities such as Agatha Christie visited the site,⁴⁴ or Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII)

⁴³ Pierre Leriche pointed out to me, during a visit to the site on 30 March 2010, that the archaeological evidence makes it quite clear that Roman Dura was *not* ‘dying before the Sasanians killed it’ – as Rostovtzeff (1938a) 31, had claimed – but that there is indeed abundant evidence for workshops and commercial activities, e.g. ovens for pottery and manufacturing facilities.

⁴⁴ Agatha Christie is said to have visited Dura together with her husband, the Near Eastern archaeologist Max Mallowan, on 8 November 1934. Cf. Hopkins (1979) 214–15. Christie

came to listen to Rostovtzeff's lecture on the frescoes from the Christian building,⁴⁵ it is clear that in recent years Dura-Europos has gradually crawled back into the public eye. The ongoing work of the Mission Franco-Syrienne has of course played a key role in this context, but so have the graceful efforts by Susan Matheson and her team to make the archival material at the YUAG available to any senior or junior scholar who wants to benefit from it. In addition, expositions of the finds have been upgraded substantially in recent years. Following an exhibition of the Dura material preserved at Yale at the McMullen Museum of Art at Boston College (in spring 2011)⁴⁶ and another one at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University (in late 2011 and early 2012)⁴⁷, it is now on display permanently at New Haven itself in the refurbished YUAG.⁴⁸ In Paris, the finds from Cumont's campaigns in 1922 and 1923 share a room with Palmyrene sculptures.⁴⁹ As for Syria, the presentation of the outstanding collections of the National Museum of Damascus was being completely modernised shortly before the outbreak of the current unrest, with one of its main pieces, the famous Konon fresco that sparked Dura's exploration after its discovery by British soldiers in 1920, having undergone essential restoration by the team of Pierre Leriche. In the vicinity of Dura itself, the local Museum at Deir-ez Zor, which also had some important items on display, opened its doors in April 1996.⁵⁰ Last but not least, the

herself said the following about it in Christie Mallowan (1983) 40: 'In the afternoon we go to visit the American dig at Doura. It is a pleasant visit, and they are charming to us. Yet I find my interest in the finds flagging, and an increasing difficulty in listening or in taking part in the conversation.' In his own memoirs, Mallowan (1977) 101–9 did not mention a visit to Dura in the context of his survey of the Habur valley in November and December 1934, though he describes their visit to Palmyra at the outset of that trip. Note how, in a letter to the President of Yale University, J. R. Angell, sent from Dura-Europos on 6 February 1934, Rostovtzeff wrote: 'Dura is very popular in Syria. We have frequent visits of French officers, American residents in Syria and other distinguished people. Dura certainly will become a centre of international tourism.' Cf. Bongard-Levine et al. (2007) 323, no. 13.

⁴⁵ In a letter of 23 July 1932, Rostovtzeff told Cumont about his address to the Pontificia Accademia di Archeologia in Rome on the most recent discoveries at Dura: 'Grande était la surprise du Président quand soudainement le grand Cardinal Pacelli a fait sont [sic] entrée inattendue. Alors ma conférence dans les yeux de la salle devint vraiment intéressante' ('Great was the surprise of the president [of the Pontifical Academy] when suddenly the great Cardinal Pacelli made his unexpected entry; therefore my presentation became truly interesting according to those attending'). Cf. Bongard-Levine et al. (2007) no. 94.

⁴⁶ Cf. the catalogue by Brody and Hoffman (2011).

⁴⁷ Cf. the papers in Chi and Heath (2011).

⁴⁸ Cf. the contribution to this volume by L. R. Brody.

⁴⁹ However, unlike those of Palmyra, the items from Dura-Europos were not reckoned worthy of a separate catalogue. Cf. Caubet (1990) 88–102, including a rare photograph of Cumont at the site with two French officers, from the collection of Capitaine Jumaucourt.

⁵⁰ The main piece was a relief from a small sanctuary excavated by the Mission Franco-Syrienne, cf. Bounni (1994), and the catalogue by Bonatz, Kühne and Mahmoud (1998) 142–3. The

Fondazione Benetton, Studi e Ricerche (Treviso) awarded Dura-Europos the 21st International Carlo Scarpa Prize for Gardens [*sic*] 2010, including a photographic exhibition of the site, a public seminar, a public ceremony and publication of a dossier dedicated to the site.⁵¹ The further exploration of the potential of Dura-Europos for enhancing our understanding of virtually all aspects of history in the Parthian and Roman period is still in its infancy, but it is hoped that this collection of papers will be able to contribute to granting the town its rightful place in the centre of modern scholarship on the Graeco-Roman world.

museum also showed copies (with the painter's signature reading 'Orangotango 96!') of the murals of the temple 'of the Palmyrene gods,' interestingly attempting to follow their original locations on the wall, though unfortunately turning *naos* and *pronaos* into one! Cf. *ibid.* 138–41. Finally, the little altar with its famous dedication to Zeus Betylos had been transferred (back) to the Euphrates from the National Museum of Damascus, certainly by April 1997 (when I first visited Deir ez-Zor). This is of course the very monument with which Millar (1993) I famously opens, recalling a visit to the National Museum in 1986, when the altar was still at Damascus.

⁵¹ Luciani and Boschiero (2010), simultaneously published in English and Italian versions. For more information, cf. www.fbsr.it/.

2 | Dura-Europos: A Greek Town of the Parthian Empire

LEONARDO GREGORATTI

When a detachment of British soldiers who were encamped near the ruins of Dura-Europos in 1920 accidentally discovered the frescoes of the so-called ‘temple of the Palmyrene gods’ in the north-western part of the town, the importance of this find was immediately evident,¹ and the event quickly drew the attention of the scholarly community to the isolated site situated on the western bank of the Euphrates.² Much has been accomplished since archaeological research at Dura began. Extensive campaigns of excavation have been conducted on the site, investigating large parts of the ancient settlement. All the main monuments have been brought to light: temples, streets, defensive structures and military installations. Even many private houses have been excavated and fully studied, providing a remarkable number of archaeological finds. Drawing on these sources, scholars have been able to reconstruct the evolution of the urban city plan and to outline the social, cultural and religious milieu in which the inhabitants of Dura-Europos conducted their lives.

This is particularly true with regard to the last period of settlement at the site, namely the first half of the third century AD, when the city, under Roman rule, began to assume a prominent military aspect, as a Roman military base very close to the Eastern *limes*. Nonetheless, these considerations remain substantially valid for the entire period of imperial rule, stretching from AD 165, when Lucius Verus’ legions took the town from the Parthians, depriving them of their only possession west of the Euphrates, through to AD 256/7, when the Roman garrison surrendered to the last Sasanian siege. The inscriptions, papyrological documents and archaeological data have contributed decisively to a better understanding of that period of nearly ninety years, and at times to a detailed knowledge.

Much more problematic is the situation in the previous period of the city’s existence, namely the centuries that Dura spent under the rule of the Arsacids, Rome’s traditional opponents in the East. Despite the huge

¹ As attested by Breasted (1922b).

² See the introduction to this volume by T. Kaizer for some further details.

wealth of information that has been provided year after year by the excavations at Dura, there is unfortunately an overall lack of local sources concerning the Arsacid period, a well-known difficulty for all scholars dealing with Parthian history. Nonetheless the archaeological work at Dura undoubtedly surpasses, for the variety and richness of the information provided, any other Arsacid urban context with the exception of Nisa and Hatra. These problematic circumstances, compared with the relative wealth of sources offered by Roman Dura, have probably contributed significantly to the long-term relegation to a role of secondary importance suffered by the study and investigation of the very few sources available about Parthian Dura. For too long the lengthy period of Parthian occupation, an important aspect of Dura's history, has not received the attention it deserves.

Shortly after Mithridates had conquered the whole of Seleucid Mesopotamia, the city joined the already conspicuous number of Greek towns that submitted to the Great King and became an important outpost on the western border of the Parthian kingdom. The Arsacid domination lasted for more than two and a half centuries, from the last decades of the second century BC to the above-mentioned Roman occupation:³ a long period of time during which Dura's socio-political institutions, as well as its urban appearance, significantly changed and evolved, shaping the city's social structure. The social and institutional framework that ensued from this period of transformation was the same that the Romans encountered on their arrival: a local socio-political substratum into which the imperial authority gradually encroached.

In recent times, in parallel with a renewed interest in the Arsacid kingdom and in the frontier subjects of the Roman empire, such as Palmyra, some studies have appeared that have dealt with Dura's institutional status during the Parthian period. Deserving mention among the most important of these are Pascal Arnaud's contribution about the forms of the Arsacid political presence in the town,⁴ and the comprehensive study on the topic by Fergus Millar, 'Dura-Europos under Parthian Rule', published in 1998 in a volume dedicated to Parthia and the Arsacids.⁵ Furthermore, some scholars have chosen to take into consideration the nature of the across-the-border relationship between Dura and Palmyra, its famous neighbour, by focusing their attention mainly on the function of the Palmyrene settlers

³ Many publications suggest the date of 113 BC, e.g. Bellinger (1949) 200–1; Welles (1957) 469; Dirven (1999) 4. Recently that date, proposed by Bellinger on numismatic grounds, has been discussed by Edwell (2008) 101–2.

⁴ Arnaud (1986).

⁵ Millar (1998b).

operating in the city on the Euphrates well before the Roman conquest, to which epigraphic sources widely attest.⁶

Such fundamental studies have the undoubted merit of inspiring a stimulating reflection on the dynamics of power and the ruling classes in Parthian Dura. However, some scholars have dealt with the matter of Parthian Dura without devoting sufficient attention to the socio-political experience of similar entities subjected to the Arsacid kingdom, in particular the Greek *poleis* situated in Parthian territory. Parthian Dura has therefore often remained an isolated reality, separated from the political and institutional system to which it belonged, and sharing the fate already experienced by the Palmyrene *comptoirs* present in Arsacid centres, which are commonly depicted as a type of 'western islands' floating in an ill-defined Iranian ocean, due to the lack of a significant examination of the Parthian world surrounding them, in which they were absorbed.

Otherwise a Roman-centred approach has prevailed. The Durene subjects of the Great King have been considered, in many studies, almost exclusively as 'neighbours' to the Romans and trade 'partners', perhaps rather 'supporters', of the Palmyrenes. The debate on the role that Dura played within the articulated Palmyrene commercial network – which was certainly important, if, however, not as fascinating to scholars as that of the other Mesopotamian trade 'colonies' of the 'Venice of the sands'⁷ – has sometimes overshadowed those elements that Dura had in common with similar realities of the East.

Considering that the fortunate state of the site's conservation, together with the wealth of information provided by the excavations, corresponds to an almost general scarcity of sources related to the Parthian period east of the Euphrates, it seems right and proper to take into account the data from the archaeological fieldwork in Dura. This precious information can be extremely useful, not only in order to better understand Dura itself or its relations with Rome, but as a reference point to integrate and compare what other sources provide about the social dynamics and institutional balances within the Arsacid kingdom as a whole. In other words, it will be worth considering the political situation in Dura from an 'Arsacid' point of view, by viewing the town mainly as an integral, though undeniably reduced and peripheral, part of the Parthian state.

First of all, it must be emphasised that Dura-Europos was not a city founded by the Arsacids.⁸ At the beginning of the first century AD, Isidorus of Charax in Mesene, a semi-autonomous, south-Mesopotamian

⁶ Dirven (1996), followed by ead. (1999).

⁷ Will (1992).

⁸ Rostovtzeff (1941) 484.

kingdom under Parthian control, outlined in his *Parthian Stations* a sort of itinerary through the Great Kings's domains. He states that the city of Dura was a foundation of Nicanor, a Seleucid general who acted on behalf of his lord Seleucus I in the third century BC. The reference, which is included in the summarised version of Isidorus' work, gives, as schematic as it is, an interesting characterisation of the city of Dura. The Characene geographer states: 'Beyond which (Asich) is the city of Dura Nicanoris, founded by the Macedonians, also called by the Greeks Europos, 6 schoeni.'⁹ The use of the toponym Europos,¹⁰ the place name conferred by the king to the colony of Macedonian veterans set to guard the river and its route, seems to refer, as Isidorus infers, mainly to a Greek cultural sphere. Isidorus, although born in a town that was a Seleucid foundation, seems to prefer the use of the term Dura, probably the toponym by which the town was known throughout the Parthian kingdom. It is closely connected with a word of Semitic origin that designated a fortress or, in general, a fortified place, and was probably employed well before the Macedonians to mark the site. The existence of the city's double denomination, Greek and Semitic, at this early time may provide an interesting hint that the social situation of Parthian Dura had already taken on a composite character at the beginning of the first century.

It has often been noted that most of the official documents, as well as the majority of written sources from Arsacid Dura, were drawn up in Greek and followed the norms and bureaucratic uses proper to a Hellenistic system.¹¹ Moreover, it has been emphasised that the persons mentioned in these sources in most cases have Greek names, sometimes in an attempt to demonstrate a kind of ethnic continuity which connected the city's leading classes of later times with the first Macedonian colonists.¹² The archaeological data confirm without a doubt the coexistence of different cultural groups in the town. It seems that a strong Semitic component was no less active in the urban life of the Euphrates town than the Greek component. Sanctuaries and temples devoted to Hellenistic deities such as Artemis and Zeus Megistos coexisted with places of worship dedicated to divinities of local Syrian or Iranian origin, such as Atargatis, Azzanathkona or Aphlad, to mention only some important examples.¹³ Limiting our remarks only to the religious sphere, the fact that it has proved difficult to establish with any

⁹ Isidorus of Charax, *Parthian Stations* 1: Δοῦρα, Νικάνορος πόλις, κτίσμα Μακεδόνων ὑπὸ δὲ Ἑλλήνων Εὐρώπος καλεῖται.

¹⁰ It may be interesting to note that Polybius (5.48.16), when referring to the Mesopotamian campaigns of Molon (222 BC), mentions only Dura's Greek name, that is to say Europos.

¹¹ Arnaud (1986) 146; Millar (1993) 446–7.

¹² Welles (1951) 254–5.

¹³ Downey (1988a) passim.

certainly that a Greek or Semitic temple was frequented exclusively by a specific ethnic community renders it difficult, especially when considering the well-attested phenomenon of syncretism, to imagine two distinctive and separate ethnic communities within the city walls.¹⁴

The idea of Hellenisation itself, as it is for example admirably expressed by Maurice Sartre in *D'Alexandre à Zénobie*, shows the absurdity of such a distinction: 'Thus to be "Greek" no longer meant simply that one was born Greek; it meant that one identified with Greek culture, or with some fundamental aspects of that culture – in particular, the use of Greek language... to this we can add the choice of clothing, the practise of sports (and athletic nudity), the consumption of vine and olive oil, participation in Greek competition, and devotion to Greek gods. But none of these practises was obligatory, and there must have been a great variety of "Greeks" in Hellenistic Syria, depending on how many features of Hellenism each individual adopted.'¹⁵ The opportunity for admitting different levels of Hellenisation, combined with the adoption of one or more typical elements belonging to Greek culture (language, dress, diet, religion, etc.), suggests how extremely plausible the existence in the Greek and later Parthian town was of several social groups which were characterised by various forms of Hellenisation and adherence to Greek culture. Those families who claimed to be the most ancient, tracing their origins back to the first Macedonian settlers, were probably also the most Hellenised. With the passing of decades, and in consequence of the frequent mixed marriages which were widely promoted since the time of Alexander, the Greek blood in their members' veins was so diluted that it rendered them not so different in their appearance from their Syrian fellow citizens.

Nevertheless, favoured by their legendary ancestry, they safeguarded their cultural legacy in order to be able, by presenting themselves to the rest of the population as authentically Greek, to confer a historical legitimacy to the influence they exerted on Durene policy. The rest of the inhabitants of Dura were probably constituted by gradually less Hellenised social groups, from the most powerful and rich local families to the newcomers, those who – coming from the countryside and the city's territory, hardly Hellenised areas – settled permanently or temporarily in the town because they had been attracted by the opportunities that the urban activities and merchant businesses were able to offer.

Nigel Pollard's recent considerations¹⁶ point to the possibility that some citizens employed Greek names within official or Hellenised contexts, and

¹⁴ Yon (2003) 203–4.

¹⁵ Sartre (2001), with the quotation from the translation in id. (2005) 7–8.

¹⁶ Pollard (2007).

Semitic ones in the private setting. Pollard refers to the four sons of a certain Polemokrates, who appears in a papyrus dated to AD 88/9.¹⁷ Two of the brothers, although described as *Europaioi*, i.e. Durene citizens belonging to a Greek milieu, are presented also with Semitic names. Pollard's observations invite us to reconsider what are common interpretations of Durene sources. It cannot be excluded that the pre-eminence which these sources grant to the Hellenised population is due to the fact that all citizens felt obliged to present themselves in public documents and inscriptions as being as Hellenised as possible, stressing exclusively the distinctions which would serve to associate them more with the powerful Greek (or Grecised) circles. In other words, the best way to present oneself in Dura's public life consisted of proving oneself Hellenised, which demonstrates that sharing cultural values with the city's ruling classes was evidently the most effective way to be admitted into the leading groups. It is easy to understand how those who aspired to improve their position in the town's society strove to take on at least the exterior forms of the Greek way of life, not hesitating to parade these forms profusely in all public settings. The reduced number of varying Greek names attested in Dura seems to confirm such a reconstruction.

The Hellenised classes who were clearly responsible for the city's policy, though probably not so powerful with regard to economic activities, represented therefore a cultural model for the whole population. Large portions of the city's middle class, in addition to those citizens who – in order to maintain their financial condition or their pre-eminent status gained with commercial or productive activities – sought the support from the governmental authorities, saw in the adherence to Greek culture a means of integration into the city's elite and a way to assimilate themselves with the most prestigious families.

At this point it will be worth attempting to broaden the scope of our investigation, by taking into consideration the political status of other Greek communities of Parthia. Due to their economic and cultural importance, these *poleis* were normally able to preserve a substantial political autonomy, confirmed by all Great Kings until the ascent to the throne of Artabanus II (AD 12–40). In the sixth book of his *Annales*, the Roman historian Tacitus narrates the advance of Tiridates, Tiberius' candidate to the Parthian throne, through Arsacid Mesopotamia against Artabanus, which took place between AD 35 and 36.¹⁸ 'Meanwhile, with the acquiescence

¹⁷ *P. Dura* 19; Welles (1951) 259; Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 104–9; Saliou (1992); Pollard (2007) 92–3.

¹⁸ Debevoise (1938) 164; Kahrstedt (1950) 27; Schippmann (1980) 52; Lukonin (1983) 720–1; Dąbrowa (1983) 90–1; Wolski (1993) 161.

of the Parthians, Tiridates took over Nicephorium, Anthemusias and the other cities of Macedonian foundation, carrying Greek names, together with the Parthian towns of Halus and Artemita.¹⁹ In the passage quoted, Tacitus distinguishes two different groups among the conquered urban centres which Tiridates took in the course of his indomitable attack along the Euphrates towards the heart of Mesopotamia. The cities of Macedonian origin, among which – in the itinerary from Osroene southwards – Dura-Europos was certainly also included, are differentiated from the Parthian citadels by their Greek names, as a reminder of their ancient Greek foundation. From these lines it seems that, for Tacitus, the only mark of distinction between the two categories was the use of a Greek name. This idea is strengthened by the following passage, which describes Seleucia on the Tigris, the town that Tiridates entered in triumph: ‘The extreme of adulation was shown by the powerful community of Seleucia, a walled town which, faithful to the memory of its founder Seleucus, has not degenerated into barbarism.’²⁰ The metropolis of Seleucia on the Tigris was Mesopotamia’s largest, richest and most famous Greek city.²¹ It was located in the middle of one of the most populous regions in the Parthian empire and in the whole known world, in a strategic position close to both main routes through the region, that is to say the two Mesopotamian rivers. In that town, Tacitus continues:

Three hundred members, chosen for wealth or wisdom, form a senate: the people has its own prerogatives. So long as the two orders are in unison, the Parthian is ignored: if they clash, each calls in aid against its rival; and the alien, summoned to rescue a part, overpowers the whole. This had happened lately in the reign of Artabanus, who consulted his own ends by sacrificing the populace to the aristocrats: for supremacy of the people is akin to freedom; between the domination of a minority and the whim of a monarch the distance is small.²²

It seems certain that the majority of the Hellenised population of Mesopotamia was concentrated in Seleucia. They exercised unopposed political control within the city’s territory, while exerting a decisive influence on

¹⁹ Tac., *Ann.* 6.41: *At Tiridates volentibus Parthis Nichephorium et Anthemusiada ceterasque urbes, quae Macedonibus sitae Graeca vocabula usurpant, Halumque et Artemitam Parthica oppida recepit.*

²⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 6.42: *Plurimum adulationis Seleucenses induere, civica potens saepe muris neque in barbarum corrupta sed conditoris Seleucis retinens.*

²¹ Strabo 16.2.5; Plut., *Crass.* 32; Pliny, *HN* 6.122. On Seleucia, cf. Gregoratti (2012).

²² Tac. *Ann.* 6.42: *Trecenti opibus aut sapientia delecti ut senatus, sua populo vis. Et quotiens concordēs agunt, spernitur Parthus; ubi dissensere, dum sibi quisque contra aemulos subsidium vocant, accitus in partem adversum omnes valet. id nuper acciderat Artabano regnante, qui plebem primoribus tradidit ex suo usu: nam populi imperium iuxta libertatem, paucorum dominatio regiae libidini propior est.*

commercial activities and on the imposing amount of wealth connected with the merchant business. More than anywhere else, at Seleucia not only the influence of Greek culture, but even the importance assigned to the traditional institutional forms of civic government, were still strong and unchallenged. Tacitus' assertions concerning the preservation of Seleucia's civic character, established on account of its being a Macedonian foundation, seem to be closely connected with what follows. According to Tacitus, the metropolis seems to have been one of the few Greek cities, if not the only one, that was uncorrupted by cohabitation with the barbarians, which was possible only because the population was able to maintain the institutions of the πόλις, at least on a formal level. For Tacitus, the supremacy of Greek culture or the political control exercised by the families of 'Macedonian ancestry' was apparently not fundamental for a 'Greek town', since he does not even mention these elements. The existence of a classical governmental structure, based upon a limited council and an assembly of all citizens, was the distinguishing feature that determined a Greek town, and not just for its name or the circumstances of its creation.

According to Tacitus' historical scenario, the dichotomy that existed in the dispute about the city's government is clear. The wealthiest exponents of Seleucian society sat in the βουλή, many of them surely being merchants. In addition, all the citizens whose morality and prestige were strictly connected with the adoption of Greek cultural values appeared in the council too. Families of old and renowned tradition sat next to rich members of the new merchant bourgeoisie, who in most cases were probably of local origin. Their common purpose was to maintain the monopoly over the civic offices, the control of the town's policy and the rest of the population with political rights, and the limitation of the latter's role to a mere presence in the general assemblies. The conflict described by Tacitus took place within the city's leading classes. It involved that part of the population, very likely the most Hellenised, which had a voice in the civic institutional bodies. It assumed the form of a debate, internal to the πόλις, between the council and the rest of the citizenry.

In the account of Flavius Josephus, on the other hand, a particular importance is given to the ethnic element as a distinguishing feature between the groups struggling for control of the city.²³ It is difficult to believe that in Seleucia the wealthy indigenous merchants were not able to acquire at least that degree of Hellenistic appearance that would have granted them a place in the political debate. Speaking of a conflict between Greeks and non-Greeks, the Jewish historian refers to the pressure exerted on the leading

²³ Jos. Ant. 18.310–79; Goodblatt (1987); Dąbrowa (1994); Gregoratti (2012) 132.

groups by the masses of locals who constituted the lowest levels of society. They were an indispensable labour force for a vast metropolis like Seleucia, capable of assuring the town's survival, and therefore they had to be strictly controlled and maintained in a submissive condition. Apart from the conflicts within the leading Hellenised class, Seleucia was torn by the claims of Babylonians who had neither citizen nor institutional rights, and who were excluded from the public life of the πόλις. Josephus was mainly interested in the role of the non-Greeks and in particular of the Jews, since they proved instrumental in Artabanus' strategy to take control of the town. The Great King transferred several Jews into the town who had allied themselves with the non-Hellenised population and thus threatened both the political and economic supremacy of the council families.

The social scenario for the metropolis on the Tigris as outlined by the two complementary accounts of Tacitus and Josephus does not seem to differ substantially from what the excavations have revealed about the composite population of Parthian Dura. In both Seleucia and Dura, the most influential groups were constituted by the most Hellenised people of Greek or local origin, who led all the citizens belonging to the middle classes. On the other side there was a large local population scarcely Hellenised and mainly excluded by politics and wealth. Moreover, in both local contexts a strong presence of foreign Semitic communities, such as Jews and Palmyrenes, is well attested. The analogy of the two situations suggests that the distinction made by Tacitus was not based on cultural, social or ethnic considerations.

The *ceterae urbes* as mentioned by Tacitus, among which Dura itself likely found a place, were, in the historian's opinion, all those Greek towns where the traditional structures of urban self-rule, which expressed a conception of shared power, had given way to more restricted forms of administrative power. The epigraphic data from Dura indicate the pre-eminence of individual magistrates who were chosen by the population or appointed by the Arsacid monarch.²⁴ There is no actual mention of the traditional *collective* city bodies, such as for instance the βουλή, until after the Roman conquest.²⁵ The excavations conducted by Pierre Leriche around the building containing the so-called 'salle aux gradins' (which Cumont identified as an odeon) at the sanctuary of Artemis demonstrate that it is very likely that this structure was the place where the city council met in the third century AD.²⁶ It seems impossible to prove the existence of similar structures,

²⁴ Millar (1998b) 477; Arnaud (1986) 146.

²⁵ Pollard (2007) 83.

²⁶ Leriche and el Ajj (1999); Leriche (1999) 719–39.

which would have pointed to a continuity in the use of the building, in relation to the older phases of the complex, and therefore it remains uncertain whether a similar institution already existed in Parthian Dura-Europos. The similar structures which have been found near other cultic buildings have been interpreted as meeting places for the religious communities connected to the main temples instead.²⁷

The scarcity of sources does not allow us to draw conclusions about the institutional aspect of Hellenistic Dura. For the Parthian period, however, the information collected indicates, if we accept the hypothesis that a πόλις organisation survived under the Arsacids, that the role of the assemblies was radically reduced in the face of the increase in power of a very restricted number of officials. In AD 51/2 a certain Seleucos, son of Lysias, grandson of Seleucos, held the office of στρατηγός καὶ ἐπιστάτης τῆς πόλεως.²⁸ Probably the same man is mentioned with the same titles in two other texts, from AD 61/2 and 71/2, from the 'salles aux gradins' at the sanctuary of Atargatis.²⁹ Around the same time (AD 54 and 61/2) another Seleucos, or perhaps the same person, held the position of *strategos*, probably a military command or an administrative office.³⁰ A certain Lysias, son of Lysanias, grandson of Seleucos, held the office of στρατηγός καὶ ἐπιστάτης in AD 135/6.³¹ He was probably a grandson of the above-mentioned Seleucos, as the recurrence of the same names in both men's genealogy suggests that they belonged to the same family. More than sixty years after his grandfather, Lysias showed off a series of court titles which attest to a precise role in the kingdom's hierarchy and to a closer association with the monarch.³² Twenty-three years later, in AD 159, a second Lysias, also an ἐπιστάτης, died probably during a military expedition near the Beth-Ilaha, which is not otherwise defined.³³ His position was immediately assigned to a certain Lysanias, who clearly was a member of the same family.³⁴

The magistracies recorded in these inscriptions, particularly the ἐπιστάτης, are well attested in later Parthian Dura. They are not, however,

²⁷ In the temples of Atargatis and Azzanathkona there were *salles aux gradins* as well: F. E. Brown, in *Rep.* VII–VIII, 156; Downey (1988a) 103.

²⁸ *Rep.* II, 91–3; Arnaud (1986) 146; Yon (2003) 201–2; Sommer (2005a) 298.

²⁹ Cumont (1926) 429–30, no. 91; 441, no. 118.

³⁰ *Rep.* V, 113–16, no. 418; Cumont (1926) 440, no. 116.

³¹ Cumont (1926) 450–1, no. 134.

³² In Parthian times the figure of the royal bodyguard had assumed a more important position within the Arsacid court, which is evident in Josephus' account (*Ant.* 18.325–79) of the two Jewish brothers Asinaeus and Anilaus.

³³ Recently Ted Kaizer proposed to identify the place with a sanctuary outside the city: Kaizer (2009a) 239.

³⁴ Frye et al. (1955) 147–8, no. 16.

of Arsacid origin, but date back to the Hellenistic period, when the ἐπιστάτης of a town represented the Seleucid king in the city, by safeguarding the latter's interests and assuring the acknowledgement of his supreme authority.³⁵ If we continue to assume that the case of Dura-Europos is a valuable example of the *ceterae urbes* that Tacitus mentions, the epigraphic attestations would serve to define better the processes taking place in the Mesopotamian Greek cities to which the historian alludes as consumed by corruption. The documents from Dura indicate that political power was confined to a restricted number of citizens who also represented the authority of the Great King. In other words, in Dura the process of institutional evolution was caused not by a change in the political status of the city, but by the growing power of a limited group of Durenes closely connected to the Arsacids who were soon able to gain control over all the offices. In AD 51, the development towards a form of oligarchic regime was more advanced in comparison with the Seleucia of Artabanus' times. There, the impetus for a move towards an oligarchy was given by the king through his support of the βουλή. But at Dura, the figure of the ἐπιστάτης seems to have played a fundamental role. It is difficult to decide whether these two situations were different steps within the same process, beginning during the reign of Artabanus, since no reference to a βουλή is made at Dura and not a single ἐπιστάτης is documented at Seleucia. Probably the two cities, due to the difference in their size, had different institutions in the Parthian period. They underwent different transformations due to the important role that the democratic element continued to play in Seleucia.

Certainly, the changes which took place both in Dura and in Seleucia were closely connected with the policies of the Great King Artabanus and his successors, particularly Vardanes and Vologaeses I, which in both towns were aimed at restricting power to a distinct group of royal allies. The main difference between the two situations, apart from their relative size and wealth, lay in the strength of Seleucia's original democratic system, which did not accommodate for powerful figures such as existed at Dura in the form of the ἐπιστάτης, through which the King could indirectly exercise control over the city.

In the middle of the first century AD, Dura's 'institutional degeneration' is implied by the assignment of the main offices to members of a single family, that of Lysias, who maintained this monopoly even under the Romans. In the second century AD the situation had evolved, and royal influence was further reinforced through the crown's representatives at the head of the town.

³⁵ For the office of ἐπιστάτης in the Hellenistic kingdoms, see Holleaux (1933) 28, n. 1.

The middle of the first century AD saw the installation in Dura of a sort of dynastic regime totally different from those already present in Parthian client kingdoms such as Elymais, Characene or Osroene. According to the available sources, one single family actually had a monopoly of the civic government and received the main administrative offices, which were transmitted hereditarily to members of the family who had become the principal ‘King’s men’ in Dura. This situation is attested from AD 51, ten years after the powerful intervention of Artabanus II, and it represents the conclusion of the transformative process that the King promoted in all Greek communities through the selection of a city’s leading group, in order to achieve an indirect control over the town’s population and its territorial possessions. Concerning Seleucia, this is clear from the words of Tacitus: ‘This had happened lately in the reign of Artabanus, who consulted his own ends by sacrificing the populace to the aristocrats: for supremacy of the people is akin to freedom; between the domination of a minority and the whim of a monarch the distance is small.’³⁶ In Seleucia the Great King’s infiltration strategy implied the support of the pre-eminent Greek families (*primores*) against the claims of the rest of the citizens who enjoyed full rights (*populus*). In an oligarchic regime, even in a context like that of Seleucia, the King’s influence could be more effective than in a situation where the exertion of power depended on a democratic debate. It is evident that in a traditional *πόλις* organisation the variety of interests and goals, and the vivacity of political competition, would have made it nearly impossible for a superior, external authority to exert any form of control over internal civic business.

The civic monetary emissions from Seleucia seem to confirm Tacitus’ statement about the political changes that occurred during the reign of Artabanus. The image of the city’s Tyche, with mural crown, normally appeared on the obverse. From the first years of Artabanus’ reign (between AD 13 and 16) a seated deity carrying a stick and identified by the legend as a personification of the *βουλή* began to appear on the reverse. Between AD 17/18 and 22/3 the Great King, seated on his throne, began to be portrayed on the obverse, his image very quickly taking the place of the Tyche, the symbol of Seleucia’s autonomy. From the numismatic point of view, the gradual installation, through the city’s council, of an oligarchic regime which found in Artabanus its main and most indispensable ally and supporter seems evident.³⁷

³⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 6.42: *Id nuper acciderat Artabano regnante, qui plebem primoribus tradidit ex suo usu: nam populi imperium iuxta libertatem, paucorum dominatio regiae libidini proprior est.*

³⁷ McDowell (1935) 117–18, 136–66, 222–8; Le Rider (1965) 24–5, 58, 87; id. (1999) 351–9, 369; Gregoratti (2012) 132–3.

The monarch aimed to intervene in civic life through his Greek agents, trying to influence the political decisions that most directly concerned his own interests. In the city of Susa the King behaved similarly. The well-known letter addressed to that town in AD 21/2 shows the King's intention to personally support one of the citizens belonging to the royalist faction, even if it meant acting against the city's laws. We must presume that in Susa, as in the other towns, the King's agents gradually came into power: Greek and perhaps even local citizens who gained a leading position in the civic councils and operated together with the provincial royal officers. This allowed the King to be politically active within the last strongholds of Greek freedom in the East.³⁸

In the years between the end of Artabanus' reign and the first attestation in Dura of a στρατηγός καὶ ἐπιστάτης (AD 51) major transformations affected the whole Parthian empire. After Tiridates' withdrawal Seleucia rebelled against the crown and managed to remain independent for seven years (AD 35/6–42/3). In the meantime Artabanus' regime, badly shaken by Rome's attacks, crumbled. It was the beginning of a decade of anarchy and civic strife. In AD 51, Vologaeses I became Great King. He was able to exploit strategic insights about the Greek towns as well as the results achieved by his predecessor, and he proved ruthless in punishing all the municipal leading classes that dared to challenge the supreme authority of the King.

It is very likely that Vologaeses consolidated and enhanced control over those Greek communities, such as Dura, where Artabanus' initiatives had met with no real opposition. It is therefore difficult to establish whether the installation of a dynastic government was the result of Artabanus' policies, or instead of the kingdom's reorganisation under Vologaeses. It seems clear, however, that at the end of the long process first stimulated by Artabanus, the particular situation at Dura – closely connected with the importance of the King's representatives in the civic councils – allowed the King to radically change the institutional nature of that Hellenistic foundation, while on the other hand Seleucia, economically isolated, was destined to a cultural starvation.

Tiridates' itinerary as recorded by Tacitus, crossing Arsacid Mesopotamia, unwound through a scenario of weakened 'Greekness' which was threatened by more than twenty years of Artabanus' reign. In Dura and the *ceterae urbes*, the remaining Greek institutions had become instruments of the King's control. Nothing but their name and the tradition of their

³⁸ SEG VII, 1; Cumont (1932); Le Rider (1965) 275–6; Zambelli (1963) 153–5; Merkelbach (2002).

foundation distinguished these Greek towns from the Arsacid *oppida* held by royal governors and satraps. It was neither the composite character of the population nor the adoption of 'barbaric' institutions that determined the 'corruption' that Tacitus spoke about, but the concentration of all power in the hands of a restricted group of citizens.

During those same years the situation in Seleucia was different, at least from a formal point of view. It is possible that the King's plan also implied the final transformation of the oligarchic government (as attested to by both Tacitus and numismatic evidence) into a dictatorship of a few faithful royal agents in the Mesopotamian metropolis.

Nevertheless, from Tacitus' point of view, as regards the spread of local tyrannies that took place in first-century Mesopotamia after the defection of the minor Greek communities, only one 'Greek' island resisted the advance of Oriental despotism: Seleucia on the Tigris. The city suffered heavily from interference by the crown, but, unlike Dura, the collegial structures of the πόλις continued to grant, at least formally, a potentially enlarged basis for the exertion of power in the city. According to the historical account, that was sufficient for the ideals of democracy and self-government to remain alive and vivid among the citizens, despite the recent political transformations. For Tacitus this was enough to make a distinction between the government of the few in Seleucia and the dynastic occupation of power in Dura and the *ceterae urbes*. Ready to greet Rome's envoys enthusiastically, the inhabitants of Seleucia played the role, in the propagandistic reconstruction of the Roman historian, of the only guardians of Greek democratic culture left, the last firm fragment of the West in the *mare magnum* of Arsacid despotism.

3 | Everyday Life in Roman Dura-Europos

The Evidence of Dress Practices

J. A. BAIRD

Introduction

The relevance of dress and personal adornment to studies of identities and communities has been demonstrated in recent years, and the study of the Roman world is no exception.¹ This chapter uses the archival records of the joint expedition conducted by Yale University and the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres at Dura-Europos to examine dress practices at the site. Due to the extensive urban excavations, it is often supposed that Dura is a good place to study ancient daily life. However, this is assumed to be true simply from the extent of excavated housing and the perceived mundanity of the site. Here, one facet of daily life, namely that of dress practices, is studied to attempt to illuminate what this may tell us about lived experience in ancient Dura.

The relevant evidence for the study of dress practices and personal adornment at Dura includes artefacts as well as pictorial and textual remains. Among the artefacts, there are several forms of evidence for dress: ancient textiles, jewellery, clothing fasteners, as well as toilet and grooming implements. While few of these were published in the series of preliminary and final reports on the site, the excavators recorded many. The textiles and leather come almost entirely from secondary contexts at Dura, from the fill in the ramp that was built in an attempt to reinforce the city walls against

¹ Several recent volumes tackle issues of Roman clothing and personal appearance, including Colburn and Heyn (2008), Edmondson and Keith (2008) and Olson (2008). The interest in such topics in the ancient world is of course part of a broader trend of interest in both dress and the body, much of it building on theories of Barthes, Foucault and Bourdieu, which has seen the establishment of such journals as *Fashion Theory*. On changing archaeological approaches to the body, see Joyce (2005), Meskell (2000) and Sørensen (2007) 87–90.

I would like to thank Ted Kaizer for the invitations to contribute both to the Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos symposium and this volume. I am also grateful to Susan Matheson, the Molly and Walter Bareiss Curator of Ancient Art at the Yale University Art Gallery, and Lisa Brody, Associate Curator of Ancient Art, for access to the Dura-Europos archives. Penelope Allison kindly shared forthcoming work, and Simon James and Daniel Stewart read versions of this paper. All mistakes are, of course, my own. This work was carried out during a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, and I would also like to thank the Trust for its support.

Sasanian incursion. Groups of dress items were also found with other grave goods in the necropolis outside of the town walls, although many of the tombs were heavily disturbed by ancient and modern looting before the excavations were conducted.²

Jewellery was excavated throughout the site, and unsurprisingly much of this seems simply to have been lost in antiquity, but further items, deliberately deposited, come from hoards. Toilet and grooming implements were also small, and easily broken or lost, and were found again throughout the site. Of course, we are missing much: fasteners would have worked to arrange now lost textiles, *spatulae* could apply pigments no longer preserved, small glass and ceramic vessels could hold long disappeared perfumes, pigments and other such materials, and pins could have held hairstyles which we can only infer. Despite these challenges, the archaeological evidence offers an opportunity to discuss the visual appearance of people at Dura without simply inferring it from idealised representations in sculpture and painting.³ Dura also allows a case study from a discrete body of related evidence, which is useful when so many studies of ancient dress practices draw on a very wide geographical and temporal range of examples.⁴

A number of perspectives may be understood from a contextual study of items of personal dress at Dura. First, there is their use in the construction of individuals' appearance; not only singly but in combination, not only as dress items but as evidence for the act of dressing. Thus, an attempt can be made to examine not only the ways in which dress, and the body, were a means of social communication, but also the ways in which items of dress could be combined, and the ways in which these were used to construct particular appearances.⁵ We may also consider spatial distributions of these items, and their deposition. By examining the finds in context, we can seek to understand dress practices within and between different communities at Dura, and what this might tell us more broadly about culture and society at the site. How one presents oneself physically is the basic visual interface between the individual and society, and dress has a close association with

² Toll, in *Rep.* IX.2. The chronology of the necropolis is further complicated by the reuse of many of the tombs in antiquity.

³ For a study of Graeco-Roman dress in this region, see B. Goldman (2001), based on the 'monumental' evidence (i.e. funerary sculpture and wall paintings). On the costumes of the synagogue paintings, id. (1992); Roussin (2001) looks at Jewish dress, including that in the Dura synagogue paintings.

⁴ See, e.g., Croom (2000) and the essays in Sebasta and Bonfante (2001). Many studies on this topic in the Roman world skip between the Republican period and Late Antiquity: see e.g. Harlow (2004).

⁵ Sørensen (2007) 90.

the body and hence with notions of the self. Because of this, dress practices, including clothing, jewellery and other accoutrements, are bound up in personal and group identities, and are thus a means of communication, part of how individuals and groups express themselves and demonstrate difference.⁶ The repeated practice, the habit, of dressing, and the performance of being dressed, is also a means by which social memory is formed.

Dura's excavation early in the twentieth century came at a time when there was relatively little interest in what we would now call 'small finds'. The publication of objects from the site concentrated on finds perceived to be of higher status, which included some jewellery, particularly that of precious metals, but focussed more on objects considered to be of artistic value. Despite this lack of interest in the more mundane finds in the published accounts from Dura, the archival records allow a more complete picture. From the fifth to tenth seasons of work by the Yale–French Academy team at Dura, object registers were made on the site during the fieldwork, which recorded the find-spot of most of the objects recovered. These lists included thousands of objects which were not published, as well as those which, for a variety of reasons, did not become part of the Yale University Art Gallery or National Museum at Damascus collections.⁷ These field object registers allow for the most comprehensive possible picture of the assemblages of Dura. Drawing on a database created from these archival object registers, as well as on objects recorded before the object registers were begun, it is possible to examine the archaeological evidence for dress practices at Dura-Europos.⁸ What can be seen from the evidence of the small finds is that such portable material culture allowed for a particular engagement with Roman rule in the third century. As will be shown, despite the architecture, which continues an essentially local 'vernacular' into the Roman period, or the ceramics, which are locally produced Mesopotamian wares until the fall of the site, evidence of dress

⁶ Dietler and Herbich (1998) 241–2. Much ink has been spilt debating material style as a means of communication, and many neologisms coined. Among these are Wiessner's attempts to describe the social functions of style (not exclusively, it should be noted, in clothing and adornment); from this come *emblemic* and *assertive* style, the former broadcasting a known message concerning group affiliation, the latter one of personal expression and not one of clear meaning. Sackett (1985), Wiessner (1983), id. (1985).

⁷ Here, objects are given by their field number (starting with a letter denoting the season, i.e. 'E' for the fifth season, 'F' for the sixth, etc), as well as the Yale University Art Gallery number, if known, which begins with a number denoting the year of accession (this is not necessarily the year of excavation). In some cases only the gallery number is known, and in others, it was never assigned. On the specific problems of extracting data from the object registers, see Baird (2012a).

⁸ The database of the small finds from Dura was compiled as part of the author's PhD research, Baird (2006). Cf. now ead. (2014).

practices indicate a Roman Dura that was transformed by Roman rule; material culture is not only indicative of this change, but was one means by which it happened.

Dress Practices at Dura

Dress in Paintings and Sculpture

Dura is perhaps best known for its wall paintings, particularly those found in the synagogue, and indeed it was the chance discovery of wall paintings that led to the site's excavation.⁹ In these paintings, themselves mostly from sanctuaries, a range of subjects occurs, and depictions of a variety of dress practices are shown.¹⁰ These representations are useful in their own right, but problematic, as representations, for studies of clothing practices in life. For instance, the paintings of the synagogue allegedly portray the ancestors of those who used the building, and the types of dress shown on the paintings need not have borne any relationship to those in use at the time. Indeed, regarding the dress shown in the synagogue paintings it has been said that '[t]here seems to be no discernible connection between the wearer's nationality, ethnicity, or social status and his choice of costume'.¹¹ This is not to say that the dress of the figures in the murals is not part of an intentional scheme or that it has no meaning – rather, that the meaning is within artistic conventions and visual signals and cannot be directly equated with contemporary dress practices. What they *do* show is that dress is a means of marking social differentiation, including that of age and gender. Several elements of dress marking such differentiation are evident, for instance, in the synagogue murals: short tunics are worn by children, servants and labourers, and the Roman military costumes are also discernable as a separate group.¹² However, other items of dress are not easily ascribable to particular defined groups.¹³ While 'Eastern' dress might be recognisable as a visual convention in Roman imperial reliefs,¹⁴ the situation

⁹ Breasted (1922b), id. (1924).

¹⁰ B. Goldman (1992), id. (1999b). Rostovtzeff (1938a) 117 categorised the male dress of the synagogue paintings in five types.

¹¹ B. Goldman (1999b) 303.

¹² Id. (1992) 56.

¹³ Indeed, Goldman found that the dress of the synagogue murals was too problematic to be used alone as a guide to identification of people and stories represented there. He concluded many of the representations were 'stock' figures, or 'visual clichés'. *Ibid.* 65 and 74.

¹⁴ For instance, use of such markers as the so-called 'Phrygian cap'. On the representation of Parthians in Roman art, Schneider (2007).

on the ground in the East is much more complicated, and in the paintings and material remains of Dura there is evidence for dress which has been considered 'Parthian', such as baggy trousers, as well as 'Hellenic', such as tunics and draped robes.¹⁵ For representations of the Roman military, we may turn to another painting, that of Julius Terentius, performing a sacrifice to the Palmyrene gods, from the sanctuary known as the 'temple of Bel' [PLATE II].¹⁶ This painting shows labelled Roman soldiers of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* in military dress, wearing breeches, tunics, waist-belts and brooch-secured cloaks; their hair is cut short, as are their beards.¹⁷

The sculpture from Dura also gives representations of dress. While much of the surviving sculpture predates the Roman occupation of Dura, it was *in situ* in the Roman period. Like the paintings, the sculpture is problematic in its relationship to actual dress practices, particularly as many of the figures depicted are in fact deities. However, Susan Downey has noted that it is likely that most of the sculptures of Dura were made locally,¹⁸ so it seems likely that sculptors would have been aware of and influenced by local dress practices, even if many of the items of dress represented in sculpture were determined by iconographic, rather than real, clothing.¹⁹ This can be seen, for instance, in the parallel between a shoe found at Dura and a very similar one shown being worn in a relief of the god Aphlad.²⁰ The priestly dress at Dura, as represented in sculpture and painting, consisted of a long- or short-sleeved tunic, worn with a *himation*, and sometimes a conical hat.²¹

A further medium of representation of dress practices at Dura is that of graffiti found throughout the site. In graffiti, too, dress is used to demarcate certain identities and certain activities; for instance, a gladiator is recognisable from his helmet, *scutum*, greaves and dagger;²² a military man wears

¹⁵ It is interesting that at Dura, unlike Palmyra and Hatra, 'Parthian' dress, with tunic and trousers, is not the most common form of male dress in art: Downey (1977) 281. Downey notes that Parthian style dress is much more common at Palmyra and Hatra, where they were apparently adopted as a style of formal dress.

¹⁶ The temple of Bel is also known as the temple of the Palmyrene gods.

¹⁷ Recent work by Simon James has shown that much can be made of military dress practices at Dura, and that the combination of representational and archaeological evidence from Dura with regard to clothing practices of soldiers is invaluable: James (2004) 57–66 and 256ff.

¹⁸ Downey (1977) 3.

¹⁹ Dura did not apparently have the rich tradition of funerary portraiture evidenced at Palmyra, although some of the relief sculpture might indeed have been intended as portraits; see e.g. Downey (1977) no. 75, and *ibid.* 91 and 281.

²⁰ Shoe found by Cumont: Cumont (1926) 253. Aphlad relief: *Rep.* V, 111; shoe and similarity as observed by Kaplan (1971) no. 5.

²¹ Downey (1977) 281.

²² A graffito from block E7; further gladiators in graffiti recognisable from equipment were found in a house in block C7: B. Goldman (1999a) 60 and 71.

the same tunic and cloak as the soldiers in the Terentius painting;²³ and equestrians wear a riding costume of tunics and full trousers.²⁴ This chapter does not systematically study the representations of dress in paintings and sculpture at Dura, but draws them in as comparanda for the relevant archaeological remains.²⁵ It should be noted, though, that the types of dress represented in sculpture and painting differ, likely due to the limits of the different media and the subjects represented therein.²⁶

Textiles

Despite the usual lacuna in the archaeological record due to the organic nature of textiles, environments created by the depth of fill in some parts of Dura preserved a number of ancient fabrics.²⁷ Unfortunately, they come predominately from secondary contexts, found within the rampart built inside the city walls in the last period of Dura's occupation, and the others come from late tombs within the citadel.²⁸ Despite this, from the known textile fragments, as well as from texts from the site (graffiti, papyri and parchments), and from representations of textiles in painting and other media, we can say something about the ancient textiles at Dura.²⁹

The textile remains from Dura were mostly of wool, but fragments of cotton, linen and silk were also recovered. These were mostly woven (sometimes in combination), but there were also fragments of knitting found.³⁰ Tunic and mantle fragments were preserved,³¹ as well as two wool felt caps.³² Other garments include two textile fragments which were identified as possible veils or scarves, because of the edge fringing, but these are

²³ Block E7, *ibid.* 67.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 25–40 and 82. On riding costume, see also B. Goldman (1993).

²⁵ A general study of Durene art is given by Perkins (1973). The sculpture of Dura has been studied by Susan Downey, including two volumes of the final reports: Downey (1969), ead. (1977).

²⁶ E.g. the sculptures differ from the paintings in the lack of 'Parthian' tunic and trousers (worn in sculpture only by Mithras himself), Perkins (1973) 74. Downey (1977) 278 suggests this is because neither gods nor priests, who make up most of the Durene sculpture, wore such items.

²⁷ The final report on the textiles at Dura catalogued hundreds of fragments, not including very small remains, or those already published by Cumont, from his earlier excavations or elsewhere: Pfister and Bellinger (1945).

²⁸ *Ibid.* 1.

²⁹ Because textile fabrication instruments are not immediately relevant to a discussion of dress and appearance they are not discussed here, but a number of the implements are known at Dura, including many bone and iron needles, spindle whorls and distaffs, combs and loom weights, as well as installations in some structures thought to be dyeing vats.

³⁰ Pfister and Bellinger (1945) 54–6.

³¹ *Ibid.* 17–22. The mantles were so identified not on the basis of their structure, but from the decoration.

³² *Ibid.* nos 289–90, 1938.5673 and 1938.5674 respectively.

uncertain.³³ In paintings of Dura, women are sometimes shown veiled, that is, with a mantle or cloak which could be pulled over the head and across the face.³⁴ This is the case, for instance, in the Konon painting, in which Bithnanaia is shown in a veil [PLATE XIV]. From the same so-called sanctuary of Bel in which the Konon paintings were found also comes a *dipinto* of a veiled woman.³⁵ The religious context of these depictions may indicate that the veiling of women was considered appropriate for particular religious ceremonies (the Konon painting shows a sacrifice taking place), and it is perhaps pushing the evidence too far to presume that women at Dura were routinely veiled.³⁶ The veiled women of the Konon paintings also wear jewellery, including what appear to be the 'twisted' bracelets which have been found at the site (on which see below). Without further evidence it is difficult to understand the relationship between adornment and concealment of women implied by these various items of dress. What can be said is that at least in artistic representations at Dura, women are differentiated from men by means of their dress: in the Konon painting, women are shown in their floor-length clothes, their veils and their jewellery.³⁷ There is also a difference in the colour of the clothes worn by the women; their white robes stand out against the white and red worn by most of the men. A range of colours is found in the surviving textiles, from the natural colour of the wool to a range of reds, purple and blue,³⁸ with some being given woven decoration,³⁹ although of these most seem not to be garments. It is not surprising, then, given the red, blues and purples of Durene textiles, that in the sculpture, blue and 'pink' were apparently favourite colours for the drapery, where traces of paint on the sculpture survive.⁴⁰

While the names of many items of clothing worn (or at least sold) at Dura are known from graffiti, which also give their value in denarii, nothing can be said of their distribution due to the secondary deposits in which they were found and the lack of careful stratigraphic control within these. On the walls of a house with connected shops, known as the 'House of Nebuchelus' (or B8H by site nomenclature, sometimes referred to as 'the

³³ *Ibid.* nos 37–8, 1938.5462 and 1933.510 respectively. On women with veils or scarves over their heads at Dura from the evidence of the paintings, Pfister and Bellinger (1945) 11 and 15.

³⁴ On this use of the term 'veil', Llewellyn-Jones (2007) 251.

³⁵ B. Goldman (1999a) 40, graffito CI.

³⁶ On the veiling of women in Greek contexts, Llewellyn-Jones (2003) and *id.* (2007).

³⁷ Downey (1977) 281.

³⁸ Pfister and Bellinger (1945) 4–6.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 6ff.

⁴⁰ Downey (1977) 5. Colours are also attested in texts from Dura, including red kermes dye (*Rep.* IV, 132, graffito no. 264), and purple garments (*ibid.* 93, graffito no. 219, and 97, no. 222).

House of the Archives'),⁴¹ were found many graffiti, including those detailing garments and their prices.⁴² These, along with the textile production equipment and installations recovered at the site, indicate that at least some of the clothing worn at Dura was produced locally. Among the garments listed in these texts, in Greek, are a *dalmatic*, a *paragaudion* (tunic with *clavus*), *kolobion* (robe) and a *pallion* (robe). While the terminology used denotes ancient distinctions between different garments, these cannot be directly equated with particular archaeological examples. A garment such as a dalmatic seems to have ranged in price from 30 to 60 denarii, and while the graffiti are not sufficient in number to determine anything like an average price for clothing at the site, prices known range from 3 denarii for a tunic to 90 for a robe.⁴³ Evidence for imported textiles (if not garments) comes from the fragments of silk found at the site.⁴⁴ Further evidence for textiles from the Dura graffiti comes from house C7-G³.⁴⁵ This text was interpreted as a household inventory because one of the items was worn blankets, but as a room in this house seems to have been converted into a shop,⁴⁶ it is also possible this list relates to the sale of the items, either as an inventory or receipt. In either case, names of garments worn at Dura are given, and among those listed were dalmatic tunics (apparently of wool), a *byrrus* (a hooded cape) and a linen shirt.⁴⁷

Footwear

Among the organic materials that were preserved by the archaeological environments created by deep strata on certain parts of the site were

⁴¹ *Rep.* IV, 79–145; Pfister and Bellinger (1945) 12–3. The structure is also sometimes referred to as the 'House of the Clothes Merchant' in the preliminary reports. The presence of multiple rooms with benches and the connection to multiple shops indicates this might not have been a domestic dwelling; other structures with this pattern seem to have been commercial (or largely commercial) premises; see Baird (2007).

⁴² Ruffing (2000). Ruffing also lists *SEG/Rep.* equivalences.

⁴³ *P. Dura* 30, a marriage contract of AD 232, also lists clothing amongst the dowry, but while the document was found at Dura it seems to have been drawn up elsewhere. Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 153–9. A number of garments are listed, including a dalmatic, two white *pallia*, a red robe with a purple veil or hood (the most expensive item at 75 *denarii*) and a tunic, with their prices, and these are specified as new.

⁴⁴ Pfister and Bellinger (1945) 53–4.

⁴⁵ *Rep.* IV, 153–7. Graffito no. 300 was found on the east wall of room 1 to the north of the door opening into the courtyard, as was a related fragment, found on the south doorpost of the same wall, no. 301.

⁴⁶ Room 20, which intercommunicated with room 19 where the graffito was found.

⁴⁷ Other items included cushions, some made of leather.

leather remains, including footwear.⁴⁸ Shoes made of woven grass were also preserved.⁴⁹ While there are not enough recorded surviving pieces of footwear to make age or gender profiles from shoes sizes, as has been done elsewhere,⁵⁰ it can be seen that the preserved footwear from Dura is not unlike that found elsewhere in the Roman empire in the third century. Forms including the *caligae* (military boots) and *calceii* (closed shoes) were found, as well as slippers and *soleae* (sandals).⁵¹ Only two certain pairs were found, one of which was found on the remains of their final owner.⁵² Sizes and styles were thought to show a range of men's, women's and children's shoes, but as only twenty-seven shoes, not including the small fragments, were recovered, and all of known context were recovered from the wall street, it is difficult to discern overall patterns. Several of the shoes showed the remains of hobnails, and some had decoration including stamped patterns on the leather. In short, what remains of the Dura footwear is in keeping with what would be expected at a third-century Roman site.

Jewellery and Clothing Fasteners

While Dura is unusual in its preservation of the textile remains, dress practices can also be studied from the objects which held some of these textiles in place, such as brooches. Jewellery was also excavated, including finger rings, earrings, bracelets and other adornments such as bead necklaces. Approaches to jewellery have often focussed on status, an obvious topic given the precious metals in which some jewellery was fashioned, but this has tended to concentrate on representational evidence.⁵³ The jewellery from Dura is not only shown in paintings from the site, however, but known from the many preserved objects, allowing an opportunity to study those objects in gold and silver and those of copper alloy, iron and other materials.

⁴⁸ The leather was the topic of two reports now held at Yale, but neither of these was published: Gansser-Burckhardt (no date) and Kaplan (1971). Gansser-Burckhardt's report is undated, but studies leather delivered by Frank Brown in 1952, and predates Kaplan's report.

⁴⁹ Shown in YUAG negative FIII78.

⁵⁰ As at Vindolanda, by van Driel-Murray (1995), and other military sites, id. (2001a) 361. For a more recent study of the Vindolanda footwear, see id. (2001b).

⁵¹ Names refer to standard archaeological usage rather than necessarily conforming to use in ancient texts; on the terminology of Roman footwear, N. Goldman (2001), van Driel-Murray (2001a) 347.

⁵² The first is not extant but shown in YUAG negative K379a, the others at Yale, YUAG 1929.413 and 1929.443. Those shown in K379a were found on a body found within the citadel and likely post-date the abandonment of the town.

⁵³ Stout (2001).

Brooches

Over two hundred brooches from known contexts were recorded at Dura.⁵⁴ The final report on the bronze objects catalogues a total of 181 brooches (if we combine the numbers of the enamelled fibulae, catalogued separately from the rest of the fibulae), but as these include those from the first four seasons, not all come from known *loci*.⁵⁵ Neither the published catalogue nor the unpublished object registers are without their problems. The catalogue gives full descriptions, but many are from unknown contexts, whereas the object registers have contexts but are often lacking descriptions.⁵⁶

By far the most common type of brooch found at Dura is the crossbow, at 46 per cent of the total of those of known types from known contexts.⁵⁷ This fits with what we would expect of a third-century military site assemblage, and '[i]t may be suggested that the Dura material constitutes a fairly typical middle imperial military site assemblage, i.e. consisting mostly of types common across the empire with a few exotica'.⁵⁸ If the crossbow brooches can be (as they generally are) taken to be military,⁵⁹ then it is interesting that they are not only found in the area of the military camp (in blocks E7, E8, F3 and J8), but also in the citadel bounding the east side of the site, in houses (C7-A, C7-C², G3-F, G3-L, M7-H), shops and public areas (including in block B2, the C3 baths, a street in the agora adjacent to block G1, and shops B8-H17 and G2-24), as well as many from the fill in the wall street. These brooches, for supporting a heavy cloak, are suggestive of a military presence which permeated the site and was not limited to the area of the camp.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ 206 were recorded in the object registers, but not all of these were recorded in detail and accessioned by YUAG. Of those without context in the final report on the bronze objects, some are likely those recorded in the object registers, but have lost their association with the field number and context, and still others were excavated before contextual information was routinely recorded. Two further brooches, set with stones, were not included in the fibulae catalogue of Frisch and Toll, which were published in *Rep.* II, 78 and *Rep.* IV, 256.

⁵⁵ Frisch and Toll (1949).

⁵⁶ About 45 per cent of the brooches catalogued by Frisch and Toll (1949) are from unknown contexts at Dura. All of the 206 in the object registers have known contexts, but of these, 67 per cent are listed only as 'bronze fibula' and are of unknown type.

⁵⁷ Crossbow brooches make up 49 per cent of those in Frisch and Toll, not all of which are from known contexts.

⁵⁸ James (2004) 56.

⁵⁹ See e.g. Swift (2000) 73; Wild (1985) 386. Crossbow brooches have occasionally been found in funerary contexts associated with women and children, however.

⁶⁰ The lack of tight stratigraphic controls however means that this total military presence may be that related to the final siege of Dura.

The 'Aucissa' brooches, by contrast, generally dated much earlier than the third century, are the next most common type after the crossbow brooch, but with a much smaller proportion: 9 per cent of known types from known contexts.⁶¹ Several of these come from secondary contexts (in the wall street and a trench made in the rubbish fill overlaying the necropolis), but the remainder come from domestic contexts (houses C3-B, C7-C² and C7-G³), and none from within the military camp, perhaps indicating that these were already in use at Dura before 165 or that they were left by the brief Trajanic occupation.⁶²

Finger Rings [PLATE III]

Certain types of finger rings, as will be discussed below, seem to be associated with women, but overall it is problematic to use finger rings for the gendering of finds, as size alone is not enough to determine the wearer.⁶³ The rings are difficult to quantify from the original artefact records, because many copper-alloy rings were found which may or may not have been finger rings, and not all of these have anything other than a very cursory description. However, despite these problems, there are several groups of finger rings which are discernable, including those with attached keys and those which had inset intaglios.⁶⁴ Further insight can be gained from the distributions of different metals used for the rings. The largest group of finger rings at Dura is the plain type, although most are not recorded in sufficient detail to categorise them further. In terms of the metals used, the largest number are copper alloy, but iron finger rings were also found, and in the necropolis were associated with the bodies of both women⁶⁵ and men.⁶⁶

⁶¹ S-shaped plate fibulae are the third most common, at almost 6 per cent. A number of Swastika plate fibulae, dolphin fibulae and pierced fibulae types were also excavated; for the full range see Frisch and Toll (1949).

⁶² James (2004) 55. There is nothing else from these contexts to suggest that the Aucissa brooches might be associated with the Palmyrene mercenaries at Dura, as proposed by James (2004) 240.

⁶³ Allason-Jones (1995) 27.

⁶⁴ More than half of the copper alloy recorded rings (known at Yale or in Damascus) are plain, undecorated types. Of the remainder, 10 per cent had a flat bezel, and a further 6 per cent had a bezel for an intaglio which was missing. Ribbed and those categorised as 'miscellaneous', including the key rings, make up the remainder.

⁶⁵ Tomb 6, Loc IV; *Rep.* IX.2, 30.

⁶⁶ Tomb 6, Loc III; *Rep.* IX.2, 29, 1938.5208. An iron ring was also found with one of the soldiers in the T19 mine: James (2004) 63 and 117.

Among the finger rings from Dura are a group of ring-keys. These are finger rings of copper alloy or, less often, iron which have a protrusion which is itself a key, or is made to look like a key. Such rings are known from elsewhere in the empire.⁶⁷ The examples from Dura come from a number of contexts both inside and outside the military base.⁶⁸ One was found in the necropolis, where it was associated with skeletal remains identified as female.⁶⁹ These are interesting items of jewellery for a number of reasons. The small keys which protrude from the rings are generally thought to have been for locks such as those on small caskets,⁷⁰ and a number of things may be deduced from this. First is the existence of the corresponding lockable item, which itself is indicative of contents which were of value. These rings then are not only significant for their own value, or for what they opened, but because those wearing them were actively signalling that they were in possession of something of sufficient value to be worth locking up. In this way, ring-keys might be understood as a visible proxy for concealed wealth (or, indeed, the desire to have the pretence of such).⁷¹ In terms of visible display, these are not simply items of jewellery, but rings which denote further objects. Because the keys, in some cases, lie flat against the finger, it would have been necessary to take these off to use them. The ring-keys then are, in their display and in their use, one way in which relationships between people were mediated, but also relationships between people and other objects (namely, the caskets that these keys opened, and their contents).⁷²

Keys which were not on rings were also found at Dura, generally also of copper alloy, but occasionally iron, and occasionally decorated.⁷³ It is

⁶⁷ See e.g. those from Britain, Gaul and Pompeii: Allison (2006) 106, cat. no. 560; Guiraud (1989) 191–3; Johns (1996) 55–7. The example from Pompeii was found on the finger of a skeleton, but the skeletons were not sexed (although in some case gender was inferred from jewellery); see Lazer (2009).

⁶⁸ Only ten of the finger rings with keys at Dura come from known loci: E263, F2154a, F2198c, F844b, G1859, H22b, H197e, H391, H407 and I599. Another ten are known from photographs in the YUAG archive but seem to have been excavated in the seasons before object records were systematically kept (these appear in YUAG archive photographs yale-807, yale-809 and yale-810).

⁶⁹ I599 from Tomb 3, Loc 13. Toll, in *Rep.* IX.2, 68. The criteria used for the sexing of the skeletal remains was not recorded, and the material was not retained, so the identifications should be treated with caution.

⁷⁰ Johns (1996) 55.

⁷¹ Crummy's seminal study classifies ring-keys as 'furniture fragments and fittings', although other lock and keys are separately classified; neither is considered an item of adornment. Crummy (1983) 84.

⁷² Latour (2000) 18.

⁷³ Eleven other keys were recovered from known contexts, both copper alloy and iron examples. A decorated example comes from a large house in the agora, a key with a dog's head handle: E559d.

possible these, too, were worn on the body and displayed. Jewellery at Palmyra is known primarily from the funerary portraiture rather from small finds,⁷⁴ but on female funerary portraits from Palmyra, keys are shown suspended from fibulae, or held in the hand.⁷⁵ That keys are depicted on portraits such as these show that these objects could have a symbolic as well as a practical value. There also appears to be a connection between keys, symbolically, and ring-keys, as adornment, and women.⁷⁶

Intaglios

Also amongst the jewellery from Dura are intaglios, which were used both on finger rings and bracelets, although many were found alone, having come loose from their settings. Intaglios from Dura were found throughout the city, including in houses, sanctuaries and other, public, contexts.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, many of the intaglios seem to have been lost, as is certainly the case with those found in the drains of the F3 baths.⁷⁸ Unlike the copper-alloy and iron ring-keys, when found in their setting, the rings with intaglios were frequently made of silver, and there are also two examples with gold settings.⁷⁹ The gems themselves were carnelian, agate, garnet, jasper, sardonyx and glass paste.⁸⁰ Most of the identifiable figures on the intaglios are divinities or mythological figures from the Classical repertoire.⁸¹

Intaglios were found all over Dura-Europos, probably because they were easily lost. One is known from the necropolis, but is not associated with a particular grave assemblage.⁸² Two were part of hoards, one near the

⁷⁴ MacKay (1949). A study of dress at Palmyra was also made by Seyrig (1937).

⁷⁵ MacKay (1949). Suspended from fibulae, see *ibid.* pl. LV.2, Segel, daughter of Atenuri, son of Moqimu (Museum of Antiquities, Istanbul). For a portrait in which a distaff and spindle are held in one hand, and a key in another, *ibid.* pl. LVII.1, Bathanna, daughter of Moqimu (Ny Carlsberg). In another portrait thought to be that of a slave due to the lack of adornment, three keys are held in the hand, *ibid.* pl. LII.1 (Ny Carlsberg). For a key worn suspended, see the funerary relief of Haggat, Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor (1993) 164–5, no. 168. On the status of Palmyrene women from epigraphic evidence, Cussini (2005).

⁷⁶ Indeed, based on the size, the ring-key from the house insula of the Menander referred to above is rather small to have been worn by a male. Allison (*forthcoming*), Furger (1990).

⁷⁷ The intaglios from Dura have been studied by Hélène Guiraud: Guiraud (1992); the intaglios of Dura are also discussed in *ead.* (1996).

⁷⁸ 1933.4334, 1938.4333 and 1938.4334. F1805 and F1804 were found in rooms of the C3 baths.

⁷⁹ One of the two intaglios with gold settings is a fibula, rather than a ring, as are the rest of the intaglios with surviving settings, save one, a silver bracelet.

⁸⁰ There are also green and grey unidentified stones.

⁸¹ These include Diana, Athena-Minerva, Victoria, Fortuna-Tyche, Bonus-Eventus, Mercury, Narcissus and a Satyr. Others have unidentified male or female figures, and there are several animals including eagles, goats and an ant.

⁸² I 39 (1938.2394), from Necropolis trench II, a male divinity intaglio of agate in silver. Guiraud (1992), no. 2.

Palmyra gate,⁸³ and another which seems to have been unrecognised as a hoard. The object registers show that three of the intaglios were apparently found on the same day of the excavations in the same room (18 January 1933, in B2-D10) along with a necklace, earring and silver medallion. The co-occurrence of all of these items of jewellery in a single room and probably from a similar stratigraphic context might indicate that they formed part of a hoard which was not documented as such at the time of excavation.⁸⁴ Two of the three intaglios from this location were still in their settings, as was that from the Palmyra gate hoard. The presence of such items in hoards shows that jewellery could be used as a means of storing wealth in addition to displaying prestige. Another use might be demonstrated by the intaglio recovered from the pronaos of the temple of Atargatis, where a sardonyx intaglio of Fortuna/Tyche might have been part of a dedication.⁸⁵

Like the ring-keys, the rings and other jewellery with intaglios are not only decorative, or for bodily adornment, but inherently indicative of their use in practice. The intaglios were set into jewellery which was worn, and this could be used to make a sealing. These could be used to seal documents, and a seal for a parchment or papyrus was found in the redoubt palace of Dura, although the horse on this seal does not match any of the excavated intaglios.⁸⁶ While intaglios are generally considered in terms of their iconography, and from an art-historical perspective, the implications of their display and use are also connected to social status and its presentation, as well as to the creation of documents and even literacy.

Like most of the excavated materials of Dura, the intaglios date to the second and third centuries, and the lack of earlier examples may indicate that many of these were brought and used by the Roman army.⁸⁷ The notion that these were probably brought or imported to Dura, rather than being locally produced, is supported by the motifs on them, which are not like those in other media at the site, and it is interesting that these items of personal adornment could easily be from any part of the empire, unlike so much

⁸³ Hoard 1.

⁸⁴ Intaglios 1933.615, 1933.616b and Damascus 4928. This case also demonstrates one of the problems of looking for patterns with single classes of artefacts.

⁸⁵ K566 (1938.4332), intaglio of Fortuna/Tyche, sardonyx, Guiraud (1992) no. 7, ead. (1996) 110.

⁸⁶ H405, ead. (1992) 85; ead. (1996) fig. 2.

⁸⁷ As suggested by ead. (1992) 54. Indeed, Julius Terentius appears to be wearing a red seal ring on his left hand. Cumont (1926) 93 and James (2004) 63. However, Guiraud dates her catalogue no. 11 (1933.604b), a carnelian intaglio of Pegasus, to the second or first century BC, but as it was found in the drains of the F3 bath it is either later or was in circulation for a long period of time. Roman jewellery could have a very long use-life, through inheritance and other means; Oliver (1996) 140.

of the material culture of Dura which is very localised in character.⁸⁸ The motifs, both of animals (possibly as symbols of the hunt) and the divinities, as protectors of individuals, could also be associated with the military, if not directly,⁸⁹ and a number of them come from contexts which are associated with military occupation.⁹⁰ These small but no doubt expensive items could easily have travelled some distance from their place of manufacture, whether on the person of their owner or as trade goods. The intaglios are thus an item of personal adornment which conveyed a range of meanings: accessibility to empire-wide networks (and the display of this to those who were aware of such things); wealth sufficient to enable access to precious metals and stones; the ability to seal a document and, inherently, the link to such documents and the legal system; the possibility of understanding Classical mythology as represented in the iconography, and the differentiation of the wearers of the intaglios in all of these respects from the rest of the population.⁹¹

Beads and Bead Necklaces

Over two hundred beads from known contexts are recorded, but of course these are small and easily lost items, which are, unsurprisingly, found all over the site. Certainly, many more went unrecovered into the spoil heaps, as there was minimal sieving conducted at the time of excavation.⁹² It is difficult to reconstruct how they were worn, and in what combinations, from such information (as opposed to funerary contexts), but they survive

⁸⁸ Although, as Guiraud notes, it is possible the divinities represented on the intaglios were understood in terms of local divinities with similar attributes or powers. Guiraud (1992) 55.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* There were however earlier intaglios in use at the site, for which seals are the only evidence that survive. For instance, the five seals of *P. Dura* 18 (AD 87). Cf. Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 99.

⁹⁰ Guiraud catalogued twenty-seven intaglios, and a further three of known provenance are listed in the object registers. Those with probably military contexts of loss include 1937.4344, 1933.604b, 1938.4333, F1805 and F1804, from the F3 and C3 baths, 1933.621e from the Mithraeum, I692 from the 'palace of the dux', as well as 1929.405 from the hoard near the Palmyra gate.

⁹¹ Two much earlier seal stones were also found and classed among the beads at Dura; these were thought to have been Babylonian; unfortunately these were not from a recorded context so it is difficult to say whether these were being reused as jewellery or if they came from deposits of early material at Dura (there is evidence of much earlier, pre-Hellenistic, settlement, both on the site and in the necropolis, in the form of a cuneiform tablet and other remains). *Rep.* IV, 258–9.

⁹² The sieving of the earth at Dura (or lack thereof) was not systematically recorded, but the notebooks do occasionally mention it was being done in certain areas of the site. A brief note on the beads found in the first four seasons was written by M. T. Nettleton in *Rep.* IV, 256–8.

in a range of materials, including copper alloy, green-glazed ceramic, glass, coloured stones including carnelian and lapis lazuli, as well as amber. Some seem to have been attached to clothing,⁹³ while others were strung for necklaces or other adornments.⁹⁴ Many beads were also found in the necropolis, although often from disturbed tombs, where the contents of several *loculi* were often mixed together.⁹⁵ Those from undisturbed tombs that can be confidently said to have been a group (on a necklace or other string) show a variety of material and shape and beads were strung together into single items of jewellery.⁹⁶

Bracelets

Fifty-four complete bracelets are recorded from known contexts at Dura; further fragments and those from unknown provenance within the town are held by Yale and Damascus. The most common material for bracelets is copper alloy, but silver examples are also extant. A number of types are known, including a simple wire type with coiled ends, those of twisted metal wire (or metal decorated to look as though it is twisting, also called 'spiral' bracelets, and sometimes with coiled ends),⁹⁷ and 'serpent' or snake bracelets, which have snake head terminals, and those with other animals' heads. The twisted type of bracelet is also known at Dura from representations in painting and sculpture [PLATE IV].⁹⁸

Snake bracelets are known from elsewhere in the Roman empire, and snakes had symbolic significance in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds.⁹⁹ There are no examples from Dura of snake finger rings, and why this type of bracelet was preferred we cannot be certain. Snakes may be taken to have a number of meanings, and such bracelets may have had an apotropaic significance, or have been associated with healing, given the Asclepian

⁹³ G226c, 1938.4359, from L8-W104 (wall street fill) is a green-glazed ceramic bead which remains attached to a small piece of surviving textile.

⁹⁴ Eight flat amber beads, for instance (1938.5211), were found near the neck of a body identified as female in the necropolis. Tomb 6, Loc IV, *Rep.* IX.2, 31.

⁹⁵ *Rep.* IX.2, 125 for discussion.

⁹⁶ Toll notes the parallel for such colourful necklaces in the painting of Baribonnea from the temple of Zeus Theos (*Rep.* VII/VIII, frontispiece and 105–6).

⁹⁷ Such twisted bracelets have both Greek and 'Celtic' antecedents. Johns (1996) 118–19.

⁹⁸ As noted by Johnson, *Rep.* II, 78ff. The twisted type of bracelet can be seen on Bithnannia in the paintings from the sanctuary of Bel, and on a statuette of Artemis published by Cumont (1926) pl. LXXXIII.

⁹⁹ The significance of snake jewellery (as part of deposits which might be characterised as votive) in Roman Britain is discussed in Cool (2000). On snake jewellery more broadly, Johns (1996) 44–5 and 109–11. The Dura rings are types B-i and B-ii in Johns's typology of snake-rings and bracelets.

connection.¹⁰⁰ The bracelets that were excavated in the necropolis occur only in the burials of women and children.¹⁰¹ There are various forms from the necropolis, in a number of materials, including silver and copper alloy, sometimes with iron or copper included in a twisting pattern. There are also a variety of forms, most with overlapping ends (including those decorated with animal heads) and some with hinges.¹⁰² From the necropolis, it is apparent that bracelets might have been worn not only on the wrists but on the ankles, as a pair were found near the ankles of a body identified as female.¹⁰³ Within the city, such bracelets occur frequently in a variety of contexts, including within houses,¹⁰⁴ although in no particular repeating location within them, and also, tellingly, within one of the barracks buildings of the Roman camp, E8.¹⁰⁵

Earrings

There is some evidence that Syrian men wore earrings as a sign of age,¹⁰⁶ and that among Persians, earrings could be a sign of wealth.¹⁰⁷ They are not, then, inherently women's objects, but at Dura, earrings, like bracelets, were another item which occurred exclusively in women's burials, and those of children. The most frequent type within the city is the plain type, although those with female heads or nude females are also common, as are those with glass insets. Earrings are usually found in pairs in the necropolis [PLATE V] (where sets of pairs frequently occur),¹⁰⁸ though for obvious reasons not in the city.¹⁰⁹ Within the city, earrings are found in a number of houses¹¹⁰ as well as the military structure in E4.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁰ Johns (1996) 111.

¹⁰¹ *Rep.* IX.2, 116. Some of the bodies identified as those of women and of children had pairs of bracelets associated with them, including the silver bracelets found near the wrists of the child in Tomb 40, Loc XVI. No sex is recorded for the remains identified as those of children.

¹⁰² *Rep.* IX.3, 116.

¹⁰³ Tomb 22, Loc IX.

¹⁰⁴ E185, F1415, F1512b, G75, I367, K112, K134, K185.

¹⁰⁵ H209k, H233l, H303, H351l.

¹⁰⁶ Allason-Jones (1995) 25.

¹⁰⁷ Stout (2001) 96.

¹⁰⁸ Rings thought by the excavators to have been used in the hair, or on something worn over the hair, as six silver rings were found each side of the skull of a body identified as female in the necropolis. It is possible, however, that multiple earrings were worn in each ear (as paralleled on various Palmyrene funerary stele); Tomb 6, Loc 4; *Rep.* IX.2, 30, pl. XXXV. Three silver rings were found on each side of a child's skull in Tomb 33, Loc XI; *Rep.* IX.2, 66.

¹⁰⁹ *Rep.* IX.2, 118–21.

¹¹⁰ E363, E75, E78, F1859, F1898c, F2222.

¹¹¹ F406f.

Metals and Deposition

Some of the artefacts of dress practice which survive from Dura come from different depositional circumstances, namely that of hoards. This includes the hoard of jewellery recovered from within a structure near the Palmyra gate.¹¹² This hoard also contained 788 coins, which together with the jewellery were found in a jar, and which provide a *terminus ante quem* for deposition of the group of ca. AD 256. This hoard appears to have been deliberately deposited during the final occupation of the city, and the coins seem to have been the accumulated pay of a soldier.¹¹³ It included gold and silver bracelets and earrings, as well as a silver fibula with semiprecious stones and a silver pendant. This group demonstrates jewellery was not only for display, but could also be a means of storing wealth, as noted above. It is of course possible that these items held more than monetary value for the owner, but the placement with such a large number of coins would seem to indicate parallel value in those terms, at least at the time of deposition.

Overall patterns within the town are problematic, given the nature of the data, but at a general level we can see that a massive amount of jewellery (bracelets, beads, earrings and fingers rings) was found inside the Roman camp. Given the fact that there is little evidence Roman soldiers wore any (aside from brooches and seal rings), this raises interesting questions about the nature of the community inside the camp.¹¹⁴ In the necropolis, jewellery and further precious metals are found, like the very thin gold leaves which appear over the eyes and mouth, and around the heads, of some internments. Some of these ornaments seem to have been exclusively for use in death rather than life. Copper-alloy, silver and iron rings and bracelets were all found in the necropolis and in the city, but the proportions of metals are different between the towns of the living and the dead. In the necropolis, different metals often occur in the same graves, but overall there is a much higher proportion of iron finger rings (only one certain example occurs in the city), and overall in the necropolis silver is much more common, accounting for 33 per cent of the earrings, finger rings and bracelets; in the city, the proportion of silver is only 13 per cent [PLATES

¹¹² This was initially published by Jotham Johnson in *Rep.* II, 78–82, and revised in *Rep.* III, 144. The coins from this hoard were published as Dura hoard I, in Bellinger (1931). Also discussed in id. (1949) 165–6.

¹¹³ Bellinger argued this was likely an accumulation of a soldier's pay, based on the almost complete exclusion of denarii (except for a single denarius, the hoard is composed of tetradrachms and antoniniani), the wide variety of mints, the fact that the coins apparently seemed unworn and uncirculated. Bellinger (1949) 166.

¹¹⁴ James (2004) 63–4.

VI–VII]. Depositional and taphonomic factors of course contributed to these differences, but, as with the gold leaf, it might be the case that different proportions reflect different choices for wear in life versus those acceptable as grave goods. The difference in the proportions of metals found inside and outside the town seem to be indicative of real trends, and these differences are not evenly split between the different items of jewellery. While it might be postulated that the higher occurrence of iron in the necropolis was pragmatic, in that it was used with the dead simply because it was cheaper, this would seem to be negated by the high proportion of silver also found in the necropolis, relative to the town.

Pins and Grooming Implements

Both bone and metal pins were found at Dura. These pins are straight, coming to a point on one end and with various decorative terminals at the other. Examples are often of ambiguous use; some may have been used to fasten clothes, for instance, and when only fragments are preserved it is not always possible to determine if it was a fragment of a pin or an implement handle.¹¹⁵ The copper-alloy pins which are not recorded beyond the object registers are very difficult to classify, as those that are recorded in more detail show in later documents that this description was used for a range of artefacts including tacks, long pins and copper-alloy fittings. The bone pins, however, are better known.¹¹⁶

The bone pins were identified as such by a long shaft which comes to a point. A variety of types were found at Dura, characterised by their heads; they range from the simplest, without a decorative end, to those with a spherical knob with varying degrees of bands and elaboration below the knob, to more elaborate figural heads, including those depicting hands, animal heads and mythological figures. Of the bone pins from known contexts, 75 per cent were found within the northern part of the town defined as the military base.¹¹⁷ 12 per cent of the total number found were recovered from the F3 baths, 11 per cent from other ‘military’ contexts including

¹¹⁵ On metal hairpins, Cool (1990). In the original object registers many fibulae were initially described as ‘pins’, or ‘clasp pins’, but for the most part it is possible to clarify this description from later photographs and drawings made of the objects, even when the objects are no longer in the Yale collections.

¹¹⁶ The bone pins that survive in the Yale collections (not all from known find-spots, as many are from the seasons before such information was recorded) were studied and classified in Russell (1976).

¹¹⁷ 131 bone pins come from known contexts at Dura. Of these, 98 are from within the military camp. Over 229 bone pins and pin fragments are known in the Yale collections, some of which were excavated before context records were kept, and some of which seem to have lost

the 'Praetorium' and 52 per cent of the total excavated number come from blocks E4 and E8. Both were blocks of housing converted for military use, as accommodation for soldiers.

Hairpins are generally assumed to be women's objects, whether these were actually used in the hair, for styling the hair or for applying cosmetics.¹¹⁸ It is interesting that such a large proportion of the bone hairpins from Dura that have a known context come from within the so-called Roman camp. If these pins can indeed be said to belong to women then this could be a meaningful spatial distribution. It would indicate the women wearing their hair in a style requiring these objects were those associated with the Roman military presence at the site. This may in fact be evidence that some of the women affiliated with the Roman soldiers arrived with them, and/or they were wearing their hair in a different manner from the local women of Dura. Not only does this indicate that women were present within the camp, but it hints at the possibility that women associated with the Roman military were presenting themselves differently than those in the rest of the city.¹¹⁹ Different hairstyles and dress practices are important, visible markers in terms of cultural and community affiliations, but they are also easy to manipulate.

The identification of the bone pins [PLATE VIII] as possible women's items is strengthened by the subject of those with figural decorative heads. One type ends in a terminal in the shape of a hand. Those are often broken, so it is not clear what, if anything, these hands once grasped, but at least one holds a small round object.¹²⁰ Elsewhere, such pins have hands shown holding what are thought to be fruit or eggs, and these are thought to be symbols of rebirth, fertility and generally good omens.¹²¹ Of the pins with figural heads, two have been identified as Venus figures, and one as Eros, and a further one as a draped female figure which is probably Venus. The Eros and female figure were found together in X7, with another pin with carved hand and one with a plain knob, in rooms which seem to have been

their association with the field number which recorded their context. For recent work on the form of the military base, James (2007).

¹¹⁸ On hairpins from Roman female graves and a representation of a Roman hairpin in Roman sculpture, Bartman (2001) 13–14. On the ambiguity of such pins, and the problem of directly equating them with the presence of females, Allason-Jones (1995) 28.

¹¹⁹ The women's hairstyles in the wall paintings of Dura are all relatively simple by comparison with imperial hairstyles evident from portraiture; it has been remarked that the Palmyrene women shown on funerary sculpture '... typically wore their hair waved in a simple centre-part style that could have easily been achieved with their own locks', unlike with wigs and other equipment necessary to make the hairstyles of imperial portraits. Bartman (2001) 17.

¹²⁰ Hand pins 1938.863 (1816b), 1933.400, 1938.906, 1938.905 and 1938.910.

¹²¹ Johns (1996) 142.

barracks adjacent to the so-called Dolicheneum.¹²² Of the two likely to be Venus, one was found in the courtyard of a house in the agora, and another in the wall street, in block J8.¹²³ Venus and Eros both relate, of course, to female beauty and would be appropriate figures for items which relate to female personal adornment. Venus is not only the pinnacle of female beauty, but is related to the act of adornment, as can be seen in the representations of the goddess with her mirror or otherwise at her toilet. Nude female figures also occur on earrings found in the Dura necropolis.¹²⁴

Mirrors are also associated with grooming and female beauty. The symbolic nature of such items is indicated by their fairly consistent recovery from female graves.¹²⁵ The recovery of jewellery so frequently from the tombs, and the difference between that recovered from bodies identified as male and female, indicates not only that such items were integral to constructions of gender, but also that these constructions were important to those inhuming these individuals.¹²⁶ Toilet items and items of adornment like pins not only link directly to ideals of female beauty (and therefore ideal femininity), but relate to an idea of elite female beauty which is part of the cultural norms of the Roman empire.¹²⁷ That a group of pins were found together in a building thought to have been converted for military use (mentioned above, X7–29) shows not only the presence of women, but

¹²² These pins were published in *Rep.* IX.3, pl. 22.1. I816a (1938.864) is the pin with a plain knob, I816c (1938.862) is that of Eros and the hand pin is I816b (1938.863).

¹²³ G185a (1934.516a), a female head and face on a bone pin terminal, from G3-J1. Venus is the attribution given by Russell, who notes that the headdress and pink colour applied to the pin have parallels in Mesopotamia and Parthian art. Russell (1976) 21. The other Venus figure was on a bone pin found in J8-W7, H541 (1938.920) For parallels of the headdress on female figurines in bone, see those from Seleucia: van Ingen (1939) esp. nos 1592c, 1594, 1595, 1596; on use of colour on those, *ibid.* 17. Further on the Eros pin, Kleiner and Matheson (1996) 162.

¹²⁴ *Rep.* IX.3, 120 (type D in PLATE V).

¹²⁵ Of those bodies identified as female, all but one had mirrors interred with them: Tomb 6 Loc IV and VIII, Tomb 22 Loc IX and Tomb 35 Loc XIII. Mirrors were copper alloy, and rectangular and circular examples are found: 1938.5225, G2055 = 1938.5157, 1938.5162.

¹²⁶ Sixteen mirrors were recorded in the object registers, only three of which came from within the city. Those within the town come from the wall street in J8 (H193b), from an unspecified location in L7 (G2021) and from the temple of Atargatis, H2-6³, (K526). Several more were catalogued separately by Toll, from the necropolis, and it is likely that fragments of mirrors from within the city would not have been recognised or catalogued. *Rep.* IX.2, 122–3.

¹²⁷ Swift (2009), 151–4. For representational heads on pins in Britain, including those with figure of Venus, Johns (1996) 140–3. In a third-century Syrian context one would be remiss not to also have in mind Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus. Portrait sculptures of the empress show her with much hair, worn long and waving, and generally presumed to have been a wig: Bartman (2001) 14–17. Despite this evidence for hairdressing at Dura concurring with Roman norms, other forms are known from the site, for instance the tripartite hairstyle seen on several of the plaster relief blocks; Downey (1977) nos 135–7.

a particular construction of womanhood among those associated with the Roman military occupation at Dura.¹²⁸

Similarly connected to the adornment of women are *spatulae*, thought to be for the application of cosmetics. Bone and copper-alloy examples were recorded, but few were described in detail aside from those from the necropolis. Many more ‘handles’ were found, but these could belong to a variety of implements. Certain types of copper-alloy *spatulae* seem to occur only in women’s graves.¹²⁹ Only a few examples were found complete in women’s graves, but none were of the type of the Roman period found frequently in the town, which have a long blade and straight or slightly convex edges.¹³⁰ Again, this would seem to support the signification of a feminine bodily ideal through objects which represent personal grooming within the funerary assemblage.

Body hair, including eyebrows, was another aspect of male and female personal presentation which could be manipulated,¹³¹ and the uniformity of short hairstyles and close-cut beards among the military men in the Dura paintings has already been noted.¹³² Tweezers were a means of grooming hair, and a number of these instruments have been found at Dura, generally copper alloy and made of a single piece of metal. Tweezers, of course, could also be medical instruments and be used for a variety of purposes, but an association with grooming of some sort seems confirmed by the recovery of tweezers from the C3 baths.¹³³ Tweezers are also found in domestic and military contexts.¹³⁴ Cosmetic and perfume containers allude to other forms of bodily adornment.¹³⁵ Several vessels of a type suitable for such materials were found at Dura, but unfortunately any traces that were recovered were not analysed [PLATE IX].¹³⁶

¹²⁸ On the construction of elite female identity, and the centrality of jewellery and toilet equipment in that, Swift (2009) 141–2.

¹²⁹ *Rep.* IX.2, 123.

¹³⁰ *Rep.* IX.2, 123. The only similar bronze example from inside the city is from the fill of the wall street, F266a (1938.2845).

¹³¹ Bartman (2001) 3.

¹³² James (2004) 58. Such hair and beard styles are evident both in the Terentius paintings and in the Heliodorus painted tile from L7.

¹³³ F2120a (1938.3008). Tweezers might have been carried by individuals, perhaps evidenced from a pair of tweezers from the sap, F1961.

¹³⁴ Domestic contexts include house C7A, tweezers E582 (1932.1661), house N8A, tweezers G911x and G1034b, and house D1, tweezers H743, as well as in a shop adjoining a block of houses, C7G2: E79. Military contexts include E8 (tweezers H432). Tweezers were also found in the necropolis, I 710 (1938.2999), but came from a trench rather than a tomb.

¹³⁵ On Roman cosmetics and for relevant bibliography, Olson (2009).

¹³⁶ Graeco-Roman cosmetics have been recently investigated, e.g. by Welcomme et al. (2006).

Of course, in addition to the artefacts which relate to personal grooming and ‘hygiene’ is the presence of the baths themselves. The baths at Dura are all now dated to the period of the Roman occupation, showing not only technological change, but also the introduction of different bathing practices to the town (even if accessibility was limited to the military community).¹³⁷

Gender and Military Identities at Dura

The self-presentation of Roman women has been the topic of recent study, and the textual and visual remains show the social importance of dress practices.¹³⁸ The study of gender identities and their construction, of course, extends beyond the identification of women, into the changing gender roles throughout the life course, and the differing cultural construction of gender in different communities.¹³⁹ Dress practices are but one aspect of self-presentation, community membership and gender, but they are illuminating nonetheless. As shown above, objects which seem to be associated with women not only differentiate women, but include those objects related to privacy, wealth and status. Jewellery, textiles including veils, and toilet items all served to construct a certain presentation, and while the paintings at Dura are an idealised representation, these too demonstrate gender differentiation.

One of the items in the necropolis found to belong exclusively to the burials of women and children were bracelets;¹⁴⁰ the most common ornament in women’s burials was a small silver ring, or less often, a copper-alloy one; these rings seem to have been used in the hair, or perhaps as earrings.¹⁴¹ The interpretative utility of the rings is less than that of the bracelets as it is often difficult to ascertain which rings were worn on the body or had other purposes, and even certain finger rings may have belonged to males or females, with size being a poor indicator of a gendered wearing.¹⁴²

Another item found in the necropolis associated with the internments of women and children, but not men, were copper-alloy bells, found exclusively in women’s burials, near the waist of undisturbed examples.¹⁴³ These

¹³⁷ On the Roman date of the so-called ‘Parthian’ baths, Pollard (2004).

¹³⁸ Olson (2008).

¹³⁹ The many problems of assessing gender using artefacts and assemblages have been outlined by Allison et al. (2005). On the rhetoric of adornment, Wyke (1994).

¹⁴⁰ *Rep.* IX.2, 116.

¹⁴¹ *Rep.* IX.2, 118.

¹⁴² Allason-Jones (1995) and Allison et al. (2005).

¹⁴³ *Rep.* IX.2, 121.

bells are found throughout the site, both inside and outside houses. While the spatial controls on the excavations mean that it is difficult to say much about the movement of women through the site, it might be interesting to question the sounds generated by these adorning bells, and what it meant that there were perhaps gendered noises to everyday life at Dura.¹⁴⁴ While the evidence is tenuous, we must consider that if women were partially hidden visually by the veils, their bells might have announced their presence audibly. This might in fact be two sides of the same coin – announcing presence so as to avoid an accidental glance. It is likely that there were also gendered smells, but unfortunately, as noted above, little can be said of the cosmetic and perfume vessels.

There is of course further evidence for the place of women in Durene society, for instance from the texts recovered there, and in the layout of the houses, which restrict the view into the interior space of the house by means of an L-shaped turn from the street entrance. Even if we limit ourselves to texts which mention objects, these can be revealing. For instance, *P. Dura* 30 (mentioned above, n. 43), a papyrus recording a third-century marriage contract, lists the dowry items of the bride, formerly a widow. These items are given with prices and include a number of garments, with their colours specified, as well as gold earrings and bracelets, and ceramics and other utensils.¹⁴⁵ The presence of these items in a dowry shows that they are specifically associated with ideas not just of wealth but of womanhood.

All of these dress practices, including those shown in painting, demonstrated by artefacts or written of in text, were aspects of presentation and practice that embodied and performed norms of gender,¹⁴⁶ and show how gender can be enacted through objects.¹⁴⁷ At Dura this is further

¹⁴⁴ Bells are known to have been used on horse harnesses in the Greek and Roman worlds. They could also have an apotropaic use. On bells as items of women's dress, Musche (1988) 173–5. Allison classes bells with a height of less than 30 mm as musical or jewellery items: Allison et al. (2005), 8.2.2e. The bells associated with women's burials in the necropolis (where recorded) are between 20 and 30 mm high. On bells in the Greek world generally, Villing (2002). On bells as part of women and children's jewellery shown on funerary portraits at Palmyra, MacKay (1949) 174–5. On the possibility of some of the bells being military, James (2004) 7. Some of the bells may have been found from gazelle pendants, of a type found with affixed bells in the necropolis and in the town; *Rep.* IX.2, 121. None of the bells at Dura were found in sanctuaries so they seem not to have a simply ritual function, and their presence throughout houses might indicate they are not horse bells.

¹⁴⁵ Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 153–9. This document was found at Dura but was in fact made elsewhere.

¹⁴⁶ Butler (1999) 171–80.

¹⁴⁷ Sørensen (2000).

complicated by the presence of the Roman military at the site. From the area within the Roman camp, including the buildings adapted for use as barracks, there is evidence for the presence of women, including the hairpins and jewellery mentioned above. This is not surprising, as Severus had lifted any technical ban on marriage in 197,¹⁴⁸ although many still hold the idea that even after this time military families would have resided separately from the soldiers.¹⁴⁹ While we can say that there were women present within the Roman camp, there is no way of telling whether most such women were of local extraction.¹⁵⁰

The presence of hairpins and *spatulae* in the town are both limited almost entirely to the areas within the Roman military camp, perhaps indicating that there were in fact differential grooming practices between this group and the majority of the population. Like the bath houses themselves, these objects are indicative of different toilet and grooming practices between the military community and the civilian population of the city. The military, of course, were not limited strictly to the area of the camp, as can be seen from the copper-alloy scales of armour found throughout the site. That there are concentrations of certain articles of women's dress inside the military camp is interesting, and we might also consider the differential construction of masculinity there. This is not easily extricable from a broader military identity, but collective identity in the Roman military included aspects such as gender, language (in the official use of Latin) and martial aspects. Military dress was an important means of signalling not only group affiliation but also the position of power over the local community, as membership in the Roman military also signalled a particular relationship to the state. This power was demonstrated in part through dress and by means of a particular projection of masculinity, just as it was enacted spatially by control of the city walls and gates surrounding the town. Simon James has considered the military dress of Dura as a group, including those parts of belts, baldrics and bridles which may have come from human dress or horse harnesses.¹⁵¹ Among the motifs occurring on the military dress and horse fittings are a harness pendant with a phallus, and others with representations including swords and shields; overall there appears to be a range of 'appropriate' symbols for military fittings. Together with a distinctive tunic, cloak and brooch, sword, belts and other equipment, the

¹⁴⁸ Herodian, 3.8.4–5.

¹⁴⁹ Phang (2001) 35, 127–9.

¹⁵⁰ There is a mid-third-century divorce document from Dura which shows at least one case of a local woman marrying a Roman soldier, *P. Dura* 32.

¹⁵¹ James (2004) 49.

appearance of soldiers would have been distinctive and recognisable.¹⁵² In this case, it is a certain norm of Roman masculinity which is inherent in the dress practices, and the distinctive dress of the Roman military would have set its members apart from the local community not just visually but also in the different masculine norms they embodied. While we know far less about the dress of non-military men at Dura, the existence of difference (in the presence of military dress) is significant.

Other communities at Dura-Europos might well have been recognisable from their dress. For instance, the Palmyrenes known to have been at Dura seem to have been a community that might have demarcated itself in such ways.¹⁵³ While there is no direct evidence of this community in dress-related artefacts discussed, in the paintings from house M7-W, depicting people with Palmyrene names written in Greek and Palmyrene, the dress is not unlike that in other Durene paintings. The evidence for dress practices amongst the known Jewish and Christian communities at Dura is similarly ambiguous.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the items of dress and adornment at Dura. The place of Dura in long-distance trade networks is evident from materials such as amber, lapis lazuli and silk.¹⁵⁴ Small objects, such as intaglios (and the jewellery into which they were set), indicate not only a market for such small elite items, but the practice of using such items. The materials themselves are also interesting in the differential use of metals between the necropolis and the town, alluding to a presentation by means of dress practices that was different in life and in death.

Much remains to be done on this topic: individual artefacts merit special attention, use and wear could be studied more closely, and materials can be characterised. I hope this paper is able to show, however, that despite the problems of such legacy data there is still much to be accomplished from the data of the Yale excavations. Only by examining in detail different aspects of the materialities of experience in the empire can we begin to access the complexities of daily life. Many of the items discussed here are relatively elite or status items, but the ubiquity of some items, such as brooches and jewellery, throughout the site seems to indicate that we are

¹⁵² *Ibid.* 51–2, 57–64.

¹⁵³ B. Goldman (2001) 174. On the Palmyrenes at Dura, Dirven (1999). Goldman identified other 'foreigners' at Dura from their dress in graffiti: Goldman (1990). Goldman identifies a Sarmation or Kushan lancer from his mustache and skirt, and an Iranian noble (or 'foreign dandy', as he puts it at 8) by his headgear and elaborate costume.

¹⁵⁴ Early studies of Durene and Palmyrene jewellery, such as that of Jotham Johnson, in his study of the jewellery hoard mentioned above (published in *Rep.* II), and MacKay (1949) *passim*, esp. 172, tend to ascribe the origins of Palmyrene jewellery to Dura and vice versa; this seems to be a function of the lack of comparanda at the times they were writing.

accessing a significant proportion of the population in their study. While, as has been previously asserted,¹⁵⁵ we can see Hellenistic resonances in many dress items, and particularly in the art as depicted in painting, at Dura, it is not simply a case of Dura as town in the 'Greek East' being its definitive trope. It is interesting that in a town like Dura, caught between Parthia and Rome, a Hellenistic foundation with local ceramic and architectural traditions which persisted for much of its history, we should find so many articles of dress (in both the civil and military areas of the town) which have direct comparanda elsewhere in the Roman empire.¹⁵⁶ It is probably no coincidence that the most 'Roman' artefacts at Dura are also among the most portable. This demonstrates the complexity of being Roman in the third century, and the necessity of considering multiple categories of evidence. It also shows, in selective use of 'Roman' objects, that it is the objects themselves that enable a certain way of being Roman.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ B. Goldman (2001) 179–80.

¹⁵⁶ An unknown factor is the exactly who made up the population of Dura in its final stages; the possibility remains that, by the time of the Sasanian capture, the only community remaining was that of the military.

¹⁵⁷ Olsen (2003) 98–100.

Mapping Cultural Diversity in Dura-Europos

MICHAEL SOMMER

Dura-Europos, this relatively modest town between the Parthian and the Roman empires, between East and West, *oriens* and *occidens*, between steppe and desert, confronts us with an amazing diversity of cultural affiliations. It was a town, perhaps a fortress (*dur*) of unknown size and history in Achaemenid Mesopotamia when the first Graeco-Macedonian settlers arrived in the wake of Alexander's conquest of the East; the Macedonian colony was later subdued by the Arsacids, but retained many of its characteristic colonial features throughout its long Parthian history; then came the Palmyrenes in 165, to be followed by a proper Roman garrison in the Severan period. The city then was home to numerous traders and soldiers who came from areas nearby, like Palmyra, as well as from further afield. In addition to the already syncretistic cults present in the city, new deities arrived: Jupiter Dolichenus, Mithras, Yahweh and the god of the Christians. An extraordinary multitude of cultural and religious universes appears to have co-existed on a tiny surface: in this cosmos of a town, crossing the road could literally mean to emerge in another world.

Shades of Grey

Dura-Europos was located in a twofold imperial periphery. Until what is called, from a Roman point of view, Lucius Verus' Parthian War, it belonged to the Arsacid sphere of power. From 165 onwards, it formed part of the Roman world, first as a sort of protectorate administrated and controlled by Palmyra, then, from the reign of Septimius Severus onwards, as an inherent part of the Roman province of Syria, under the military command of a *dux ripae*. In 256 or 257 it fell victim to the renewed hostilities between Rome and the expanding Persian empire, to be resettled never again.

However, Rome and the Parthian kingdom were both empires, different in many respects, but akin inasmuch they shared hierarchic centre-periphery relationships. Unlike in modern nation states, in empires – ancient and modern alike – the intensity of governance varies from area

to area. Core zones with a very high intensity of governance are surrounded, ideally in concentric circles, by peripheries with, as the distance to the core grows, decreasing degrees of governance intensity. Rome and Parthia each employed various types of indirect rule: on the local level, Rome devolved power to the cities (essentially the empire was a confederacy of cities), on its fringes to client kings enjoying extensive autonomy; the Parthians, on the other hand, had established direct rule over a relatively small core around their capital Ctesiphon in Babylonia, whereas vast territories were ruled through local dynasts and kings – again with differing degrees of autonomy, depending on their status and strategic importance for the empire. Much more than on territory, imperial power was based on the relationships between rulers and subjects: collective subjects such as tribes and cities as well as individual subjects like Roman client kings.¹

How did the political set-up of the two empires affect the Near East – and how did it affect Dura? It should be clear by now that, in an environment where governance intensity can be mapped only in different shades of grey, it is impossible to operate with categories of political affiliation drawn from the nation state. Nation states possess neat geographical borders, empires do not: instead they tend to be phased out into vast frontiers of settlement and conquest. Over millennia, the Near East had been a frontier of, and between, empires: between Egypt and Hatti (14th–13th centuries BC), of the Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires (9th–6th centuries BC), between the Seleucid and the Ptolemaic kingdoms (4th–1st centuries BC), between Rome and Parthia (1st century BC–3rd century AD), between Byzantium and the Sasanians (3rd–7th centuries AD) and later between the Crusader states and the Seljuq empire.

Imperial frontiers are spaces of ambiguity – equivocal not only politically, but also culturally, religiously and often linguistically. This ambiguity has been ignored by most analytical tools that have been applied to places like Dura-Europos: concepts such as Romanisation, Hellenisation, imperial ‘veneer’, ‘re-orientalisation’, ‘Greek city’ and so forth. Such concepts are binary in nature, thus reducing the area’s intrinsic complexity to an illegitimate degree. It is not the issue here to determine whether or not Dura-Europos ‘was’ a Greek or indeed Roman city; the question is rather to what *extent* it was Greek or Roman, and how its Greek-/Romanness interacted with other cultural and political presences in the region.

¹ The fundamental text on indirect rule is Lugard (1923), who established the ‘dual mandate’ in British Nigeria. On indirect rule in the Partho-Roman Near East, see Fowler (2010); Sommer (2003b) 394–8; id. (2005a) 66; id. (2010). For a critical point of view, see Konrad (2008).

Lost in Translation: Heuristic Tools

Over the last few decades, the historical disciplines have developed an amazing array of heuristic instruments for describing and understanding cultural change and cultural identities in imperial peripheries. In the following, I shall attempt to apply three of them to the situation in Partho-Roman Dura-Europos, a place whose qualification for a case study in cultural diversity is self-evident.

The most general of the categories in question is acculturation. In their classical ‘memorandum for the study of acculturation’, published in 1935, the anthropologists Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville Herskovits defined acculturation as comprehending “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.”² In their approach, the authors took into account parameters such as the relative and absolute sizes of the groups involved, the nature of contact (friendly vs hostile), the degrees of social complexity and a number of situations in which acculturation can occur (social equality vs social inequality; situations with or without political dominance of one group over the other). Fieldwork on acculturation has to consider ‘traits under acculturation’: their selection, determination and integration into the receiving society or societies. Finally, the authors provided us with a list of possible results of acculturation, with ‘acceptance’, ‘adaptation’ and ‘reaction’ as the basic modes of response.³ Later studies in acculturation applied narrower definitions, usually equating acculturation with what Redfield/Linton/Herskovits called ‘acceptance’,⁴ but it is precisely its versatility and openness which makes their classical approach so valuable.

² Redfield et al. (1935) 145–6.

³ *Ibid.* 148: ‘*Acceptance*: where the process of acculturation eventuates in the taking over of the greater portion of another culture, and loss of most of the older cultural heritage, with acquiescence on the part of the members of the accepting group, and, as a result, assimilation of them not only to the behaviour patterns but to the inner values of the culture with which they have come into contact. *Adaptation*: where both original and foreign traits are combined so as to produce a smoothly functioning cultural whole which is actually an historic mosaic; with either a reworking of the patterns of the two cultures into a harmonious meaningful whole to the individuals concerned or the retention of a series of more or less conflicting attitudes and points of views which are reconciled in everyday life as specific occasions arise. *Reaction*: where because of oppression, or because of the unforeseen results of the acceptance of foreign traits, contra-acculturative moments arise; these maintaining their psychological force (a) as compensations for an imposed or assumed inferiority or (b) through the prestige which a return to older pre-acculturative conditions may bring to those participating in such a movement.’

⁴ Gotter (2000).

Quite obviously, acculturation is everywhere. Only in Rousseau's state of nature, humans exist in a sphere of perfect seclusion; culture presupposes by definition contact and exchange. Here, Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity comes into play: for Bhabha, there is no such thing as culture, defined as a domain of its own with clear-cut boundaries and an invariant inventory of ideas, techniques, values, preferences etc. Instead, culture is the product of continuous negotiation and translation; it is located in a sphere where individuals are searching for their identities – most conspicuously in minority and migrant communities, where cultural identities are precarious and contested. Closely related to hybridity is the concept of 'third space' – the 'third space' being, in the words of Stuart Hall, 'a "native" or indigenous vernacular space, marked by the fusion of cultural elements drawn from all originating cultures, but resulting in a configuration in which these elements, though never equal, can no longer be disregarded or restored to their originary forms, since they no longer exist in a "pure" state but have been permanently translated.'⁵ The area for which this translation has been studied paradigmatically is the colonial world of the Caribbean, where indeed – in the context of the 'third space' of a *présence américaine* – the two original spheres of the black slaves' *présence africaine* and the white colonialists' *présence européenne* both gave way to the new hybrid one of *créolité*.⁶

Where do these theoretical preliminaries bring us with regard to Dura-Europos? First, we must be aware that we have – as compared to the rich oral tradition of the Caribbean and the immense corpus of colonial and postcolonial literature worldwide – nothing but a few fragments of exclusively material culture of which little gives us a clue as to how people perceived themselves, the respective others and their shared environment. Second, neither Roman nor 'Oriental' nor indeed local culture – or whatever scholars have attempted to trace in Dura thus far⁷ – comes as a conveniently bundled package. Rather than monolithic, the culture of the

⁵ Hall (2003a) 30. See also Pratt (1992) 6; Bhabha (2006) 28–56.

⁶ Berg and Mair (1999); Enwezor (2002); Hall (2003b); Hall (2003a). For a classicist's application of the concept, Webster (2001).

⁷ The debate on the cultural face of the 'Roman Near East' is as old as Fergus Millar's eponymous book: Millar (1993). Millar, who looks at the epigraphic record in the first place, sees only Greek and Jewish 'culture', defined as 'a tradition, an educational system, a set of customs and above all a collective understanding of the past'; *ibid.* 517, similarly Bowersock (1973); *id.* (1982); *id.* (1989); *id.* (1991) 424–7. Contra Millar, the camp of those who put forward the idea that the Graeco-Roman face of Roman Syria and Mesopotamia was a mere 'vener'; esp. Ball (2000), now also Edwell (2008), who emphasises the importance of local elements. For an intermediate position on the base of some theorising, Butcher (2003); Sommer (2005a); *id.* (2006a). On Butcher see Sommer (2005b).

Roman empire was composite, localised and hybrid in itself. It was by far not only *Graecia capta* which *ferum victorem cepit*, but a whole bunch of peripheric traditions, from Etruscan to Celtic, from Punic to Germanic, which all actively contributed to the empire's civilisation. And as tantalising as it is to find a name for the cultural universe(s) the Graeco-Macedonians found when they conquered the Near East, as Gordian it is to define such affiliations: Semitic? Aramaic? Persian? Achaemenid? Syrian? Mesopotamian? Oriental? Near Eastern? Babylonian? None of these is really to the point, though not entirely wrong either. Third, we should not forget that acculturation is a process that affects individuals and has repercussions on the human psyche. This means that the outcome will be erratic, contingent and in many cases contradictory, especially given the fragmentary nature of our evidence. What we should least expect is a coherent pattern of an entire society behaving uniformly in one or the other way. At best, we will be able to trace some trends. I shall exemplify this method with two paradigmatic case studies: firstly the Jews of Dura-Europos, a downright archetypical diaspora community, and secondly the women.

Religious Diaspora: The Jews of Dura-Europos

When the wall paintings in the assembly hall of the Dura Synagogue were first unearthed in 1932, their discovery was all but sensational. Not only was this by far the oldest place of Jewish worship found by then (and actually down to the present day); it also collided with the so far undisputed dogma of Jewish aniconism. Consequently, their importance for Jewish religious history and the art history of the later classical, early Christian and post-classical world has been much debated.⁸

There is, however, an alternative approach: instead of seeking the underlying written text, we can read the cycle of wall paintings as a – visual – text in its own right.⁹ This cycle was in fact the second set of wall paintings replacing an older one sometime after the construction of the Synagogue in AD 244/5.¹⁰ The paintings, incoherent and erratic as they may seem, tell

⁸ On the history of the discussion, Olin (2000). For a comprehensive publication of the Dura Synagogue see Kraeling (1956); cf. Goodenough (1964). The paintings from the Synagogue have been taken as 'forerunners' of early Christian art: Bickerman (1965); Weitzmann and Kessler (1990) 134; Goranson (1996); Jensen (1999). Much has been written on the assumed underlying text: Gutmann (1983); Weitzmann and Kessler (1990) 143; for an overview Gutmann (1984); id. (1988).

⁹ For a similar approach id. (1983) 38–51; Wharton (1994); ead. (1995). Cf. also Sommer (2004); id. (2005a) 337–45; id. (2006b).

¹⁰ The Synagogue also replaced an older, not purpose-built structure.

stories – stories with an immediate significance for the people living in the Jewish diaspora of third-century Mesopotamia.

What stories exactly? The cycle's epicentre is the aedicule with the Torah shrine in the hall's western wall, the best preserved one of the entire ensemble: on the niche's extrados, in the exact centre of the entire composition, is the Temple, represented as a Corinthian prostyle, but without the usual triangular pediment. It is flanked by Jewish ritual utensils, among them the Menorah, to the left and a representation of the sacrifice of Isaac to the right. Three constituents of Jewish identity – the lost Temple, the likewise lost Menorah and the son whom Abraham had intended to sacrifice: this is the programmatic focus of the assembly hall's pictorial cycle.

The theme of Jewish identity is varied and played upon in the panels. The panels above the aedicule show Isaac's benediction of Jacob, the top panel David as king of Israel. The centre row panels to the left and right show the two central sanctuaries of Judaism: the *mishkan* (Tabernacle) with the *aron habrit* (Ark of the Covenant) and the Temple of Solomon respectively (SB 1, WB 2, WB 3, WB 4, NB 1) – note the very classical design of the Temple and the *mishkan*, which makes them, ironically, the only reasonably Vitruvian buildings of the entire town.

Other themes include the infancy of Moses (WC 4), the exodus from Egypt with the crossing of the Red sea (WA 3), the kingships of David and Solomon (WA 1, WA 2, WC 3) and the prophecies of Ezekiel about the destruction of Eretz Yisrael and the resurrection of the dead. Particularly strongly feature two other biblical characters: Elijah and Esther. Elijah is the prophet who sabotages the sacrifice to Baal commissioned by Jezebel, King Ahab's Phoenician wife, and performed by four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah on Mt Carmel (SC 3, SC 4). The paintings evoke, from the Jewish point of view, the profound otherness of pagan cults, cults which the Jews of Dura-Europos encountered practically at every angle.

The last group of images deals with the story of Mordecai and Esther [PLATE X]: Mordecai is a Jew from Susa in the time of the Achaemenid empire. He adopts his cousin Hadassah (Esther) and brings her up. Later, Esther gets married to Ahasuerus, the Persian king, and Mordecai becomes a court official. In this capacity, he incurs the enmity of Haman, the vizier, who instigates a plot to kill all Jews in the empire. Thanks to Esther's intervention the plot is unveiled, Haman removed from his position and finally executed. The painting shows the triumph of Mordecai, who sits on a horse, perhaps guided by no less than his former nemesis Haman. To the right, we see the royal couple, Ahasuerus and Queen Esther, with Mordecai handing over a scroll, most likely the document unveiling the plot (WC 2).

The story is about Jewish life in the diaspora, about its precariousness, but also about the chances of peaceful co-existence with the surrounding society. The *goyim*, as represented by Haman, are a continuous source of peril for the Jews, but on the other hand the alliance between Esther and the Persian king proves to be a powerful remedy. Diaspora commands a certain degree of accommodation as essential for survival. But accommodation is no assimilation: in Ahasuerus' Persian empire, the Jews continue to live as a diasporic minority, even under a Jewish queen. Mordecai serves the Persian king, he becomes part of his court, but unlike Ahab he does not abandon his god and his people.

Such were the images the members of the Jewish congregation gazed upon when they assembled in their hall. The only way to read these images for them was to incorporate them in the framework of their daily experiences. The images' visual messages formed part of the universe of Dura-Europos, with its polyethnic, multicultural population, the ubiquity of religious competition and the resulting need to demarcate one's own cultural space. Demarcation – with its strong emphasis on the ethno-religious roots and symbols shared by all Jews, its promise of a national resurrection and its polemics against pagan idolatry – is one main theme of the paintings; the potentiality of integration as Jews in a predominantly pagan society is the other. Integration and demarcation are not mutually exclusive; for a religious minority wanting to survive in its diaspora, they go hand in hand.

Women and the Law

In the legal documents from Roman Syria and Mesopotamia, we find numerous references to women performing legal business on their own behalf, without any intervention of a guardian. Famous is Babatha, the Jewish woman from Maoza in Transjordan¹¹ who, in the turmoil of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, took refuge in the Cave of Letters near Ein Gedi on the Dead Sea. Not only did, according to a marriage contract of AD 125, the debts of her second husband Judah become part of her own liabilities,¹² she also lent him a considerable amount of money (300 silver denarii) from her own funds.¹³ Financially largely independent, she took legal action against the guardian of her son whom she blamed of not having paid

¹¹ Cotton and Greenfield (1995).

¹² *P. Yadin* 10. See Cotton (1994) 65.

¹³ Wasserstein (1989) 106.

her sufficiently for the boy's financial support.¹⁴ Though the lawsuit was finally unsuccessful, it provides sufficient evidence for a legal leeway that is uncommon for women in the ancient world.¹⁵

Another rich source for the role of women in legal transactions are the parchments and papyri from Dura-Europos (*P. Dura*) and the corpus of documents originating from the Middle Euphrates (*P. Euphr.*).¹⁶ The reader encounters several women who figure as sellers of slaves. In the Greek *P. Euphr.* 6, dating from AD 250/1, Maththabeine, daughter of Abbas, from the town of Markopolis, sells her female slave Apsalmas 'or however you like to call her' at a price of 600 *denarii*. No *kyrios*, the Greek equivalent to the Latin *tutor*, is mentioned, though Aurelius Kozas, her brother, has signed for the apparently illiterate woman.¹⁷ The buyer, Aurelia Mathaate, is also a woman and she acts in her own right as well.¹⁸ In a second deed of sale (*P. Dura* 28), dating from AD 243/4, Marcia Aurelia Matarata from Edessa sells a female slave, Matsin, to Lucas Aurelius Tiro, son of Barba-sha, at a price of 700 *denarii*. Again, she acts without the participation of a *kyrios*.¹⁹ *P. Dura* 28 and *P. Euphr.* 6 both originate from the Middle Euphrates, but the people involved come from Osrhoene. How the documents came to the Dura region we do not know, but they certainly reflect legal practice in mid-third-century Osrhoene, which may well have differed from the situation in the Middle Euphrates area.

That this is indeed the case is suggested by another deed of sale, the fragmentary Greek *P. Euphr.* 15. This document, dating from AD 236, records the sale of an unknown commodity by Aurelia Barabous, the daughter of Abedsautas, from the village of Beth Phouraia on the Khabur. Here again, a woman acts on her own behalf, but unlike the women from Osrhoene, Aurelia Barabous refers to the 'right of three children,'²⁰ the *ius trium liberorum*, an institution of Roman law that gave women the right to perform their own legal business. Like the slave sellers from Edessa and

¹⁴ For further details see Cotton (1993).

¹⁵ For a general overview on the legal position of women in the Roman world, Gardner (1995) esp. 10–35 on guardianship. As a general study in women and property rights in the Near East, in particular in the Islamic period, Shatzmiller (1995), with some comparative considerations, at 221–3.

¹⁶ Whereas the papyri suggest a rather high level of legal personality on the part of the women involved, the contribution to this volume by J.-B. Yon shows how in the epigraphy of the sanctuaries women were present as members of families though otherwise mostly absent as individuals.

¹⁷ *P. Euphr.* 6, 1–3; 8–10.

¹⁸ *P. Euphr.* 3; 14.

¹⁹ *P. Dura* 28, i–ii; 8–9.

²⁰ In the document *dikaion téknon*.

Markopolis, Aurelia Barabous is a Roman citizen – not surprisingly after the *constitutio Antoniniana* had made virtually every free inhabitant of the empire a Roman by law. But why had the women from Osrhoene found it unnecessary to refer to a specific legal instrument to which they owed their capacity to contract, whereas Aurelia Barabous explicitly cites the *ius trium liberorum*?

Given the rather minimalistic data pool, we can of course invoke chance. But there may well be another explanation for the conspicuous difference in legal practice: Dura-Europos and its hinterland on the Middle Euphrates had been subject to Greek cultural influence for several centuries. The same had not been the case in soundly Syriac-speaking Osrhoene. As a result, Greek law, which discriminated against women far more strongly than Jewish or Roman legal traditions or indeed many local laws in the Near East, had inevitably taken root in the area. Against such a background, the different ways in which the women operated made sense. For women like Aurelia Matarata from Edessa and Maththabeine from Markopolis (as for Babatha in *provincia Arabia*), their legal capacity was a matter of course. For them, the *ius trium liberorum* had little impact on their role as contracting party. The reverse holds obviously true for Aurelia Barabous: only this particular instrument borrowed from Roman law enabled her to perform her own legal business.

The cases of the three women from Rome's steppe frontier make clear how erratic and inconsistent the application of Roman law in the Oriental provinces actually was. No single rule determines how local and imperial law interacted: there is no evidence which tells us that people who had become Roman citizens following the *constitutio Antoniniana* had their ancestral local laws replaced by the *ius civile* en bloc. The cases under scrutiny here suggest that application, respectively non-application, of Roman law was, in the first place, a matter of pragmatism. The women acting as contracting parties tended to choose the legal instruments most appropriate to their individual purposes. This blends in with the wider picture of Roman *ius civile* as a warehouse where local populations could help themselves *ad gustum*.

The Wider Frame

The female protagonists of the legal documents from the Middle Euphrates and the Jews of Dura-Europos are merely two of countless possible witnesses to culture contact in the Near East in Classical antiquity. They illustrate, first, the puzzling complexity and unpredictability of acculturation

processes, and second, the synchronism of the three paradigms of ‘acceptance’, ‘adaptation’ and ‘reaction’. Some of the outcomes seem paradoxical: the Jews of the Dura Synagogue drew a clear line between themselves and the surrounding, pagan majority. At the same time they represented the focus of their own religious identity, the Temple in Jerusalem, in the manner of a Graeco-Roman temple. Perplexingly, they did this in a town where pagan sanctuaries looked strikingly unclassical. This can well be understood as a statement of cultural, if not political, affiliation: there is no doubt that the Jews, for whatever reason, wanted to have their Temple look ‘Roman’. The same Jews who were concerned about setting themselves apart from pagan cults evoked the possibility of accommodation, the topic of the Mordecai and Esther narrative. Mordecai and Esther point the way to a society of which Judaism can be part without losing its identity.

The seemingly paradoxical reality of a diaspora group torn between integration and resistance, between loss and reinforcement of their own, particular identity, points in the direction of Hall’s and Bhabha’s ‘Third Space’ as an appropriate tool for modelling the impact of multiculturalism in a place like Dura. The notion of permanent, irreversible ‘translation’ without the option of ‘retranslating’ to the original cultural ‘ingredients’ hits the mark: how this may work is shown by the women featuring in the papyri who, with their eclectic, quintessentially utilitarian approach to Roman *ius civile*, make a good case for the applicability of the ‘Third Space’ paradigm. They literally appropriated what was on offer, but with very creative minds.

Acculturation in the Partho-Sasanian-Roman Near East resulted neither in cultural ‘veneers’ nor in ‘amnesia’, nor indeed in the amalgamation of ‘Oriental’ and ‘Occidental’ elements. Rather, the continuous process of translation brought about completely new cultural paradigms, a ‘culture’ in its own right as it were, at the peripheries of two rivalling empires, but far more than the offspring of one of the two, in the meaning of ‘Hellenisation’ or ‘Romanisation’ as we used to understand it. What is required is a new set of analytical tools, ideal types, helping to understand the cultural complexity of places like Dura-Europos. In recent years, ‘Hellenisation’ and ‘Romanisation’ as paradigms have been rejected altogether and replaced by some (mainly in the Anglo-Saxon domain and often with a post-colonial impetus) with new concepts such as ‘globalisation’ or, alternatively, redefined (chiefly on the continent) to include culture contact under imperial auspices resulting in a variety of local, usually hybrid and always distinct cultural universes.²¹

²¹ See e.g. Forcey (1997); Freeman (1993); Hingley (2005); Revell (2009); and, for the continental point of view, Krausse (2005) and the contributions in Schörner (2005).

The relative density of its archaeological record and the manifest diversity of its population make Dura-Europos an ideal case study in the cultural setup of the Roman empire's periphery and, more generally, of marginal areas of premodern empires as such. Dura is indeed much more than a 'Pompey of the East' – it is a laboratory for all those scholars dealing with the Roman world's stunning diversity.

The modern history of Dura-Europos started with the unearthing of an outstanding wall painting depicting an eastern priest, which later became known as the ‘fresco of Konon’. Captain M. C. Murphy, who accidentally discovered the painting while on military campaign in the central Euphrates region in 1920, immediately recognised its rare quality and importance and the British army contacted the orientalist Henry Breasted, who happened to be in Baghdad at the time. Breasted’s subsequent publication of this and several other frescoes in the book with the telling title *Oriental Forerunners of Byzantine Painting* was the main impetus behind the excavations of Dura which started in 1922.¹ In the years and campaigns that followed, a wealth of spectacular wall paintings, sculptures and other figurative monuments were found at the site.² Before the discovery of Dura, the artistic history of Syria during the first three centuries AD had been largely unknown.³ The finds from Dura greatly enhanced our knowledge of this, and have continued to play a key role in any discussion on the culture of Roman Syria until the present day.

Figurative monuments from Dura are inextricably bound up with the notion of ‘Parthian art’. The foundations of this concept and its connection with Dura were laid by Mikhaïl Rostovtzeff in his highly influential article ‘Dura and the problem of Parthian art’ that appeared in *Yale Classical Studies* in 1935. Ever since this publication, Rostovtzeff’s definition of Parthian art has been the subject of a lively debate, which has resulted in major modifications to his theory. In spite of these changes, however, Rostovtzeff’s stylistic analysis of the figurative monuments from Dura and

¹ Breasted (1924).

² On the history of the excavations, see Hopkins (1979). For an overview of the finds made at the site in the 1920s and 1930s, see Hopkins (1936), Rostovtzeff (1938a) and Perkins (1973).

³ For a summary of what was known at the time, see Cumont (1926) esp. 165–8.

I am very grateful to Ted Kaizer for encouraging me to write something on Parthian art for this volume and not least for his forbearance during delays in completing this paper. Many thanks also to Susan Downey for reading and commenting upon an earlier version of this article. By the time this volume went into production, Stefan Hauser had published an article on Parthian art in which he arrives at conclusions very similar to my own, on the basis of an analysis of monuments from Palmyra and Hatra. Cf. Hauser (2014). Unfortunately, it was no longer possible to incorporate his results in the present publication.

other cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert still holds sway.⁴ Rostovtzeff's work appears to be so deeply ingrained in the study of the figurative monuments from Dura that it is difficult to let go of his ideas when discussing the monuments from the city.

On the basis of the monuments from Dura and the other cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert, I shall argue in this article that the term 'Parthian art' is a misnomer for the art of these cities. Of course, I am by no means the first to point this out. However, I will go a step further in arguing that one should also abolish the so-called Parthian stylistic principles that Rostovtzeff ascribed to the works of art from Dura-Europos, Palmyra, Hatra and Edessa. Not only do these characteristics lead to an exaggeration of the stylistic unity of the art within Dura itself, but they also reduce our understanding of the stylistic differences between the various cities in the region and hamper a thorough stylistic analysis of the monuments available. For these reasons, both the term 'Parthian art' and Rostovtzeff's interpretation of it are better left aside in studying the art of Dura-Europos and the other cities. But before we turn to a stylistic re-evaluation of the monuments, it is useful to deal with the history of the concept of 'Parthian art' in order to explain its longevity.⁵

Historiography of Parthian Art

Before Rostovtzeff, western scholars considered the Parthians and Parthian art an accident in the ancient world.⁶ Beginning with Johann Joachim Winckelmann, but particularly in the wake of George Rawlinson, it was common to see the Parthians as a people of nomadic origin who lacked any culture of their own.⁷ At best, they were considered to be a superficially Hellenised people whose art was a barbarised and degraded version of the Hellenistic art of the Seleucid period. In nineteenth-century Europe – a culture that was preoccupied with individuality, creativity and

⁴ Schlumberger (1960) 253–6; Will (1963) 971–81; Schlumberger (1983) 1050; Downey (1987) 580. Downey notes that these features are found in the region extending from the Syrian desert through Iran and central Asia, from the third century BC to the third century AD. Although Invernizzi (1996) 191–203 stresses the Greek origins of early Parthian art, he does agree with Rostovtzeff's stylistic principles for art from Syria and Mesopotamia dated to the Christian era.

⁵ Cf. now also Hauser (2014), discussing the problem of 'Parthian art' in relation to Hatra and Palmyra, and Dirven (2015) on the notion of continuity and change with regard to cult images in the cities of the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert.

⁶ The expression is borrowed from Rostovtzeff (1935) 160, with n. 2 for references to studies that advocate this view.

⁷ Winckelmann [1764] (1942) 88–9.

progress – borrowing was considered a sign of cultural weakness. In turn, cultural weakness was thought to result from political weakness. The fact that the Parthians had little influence on the culture of their subjects was thought to illustrate their lack of central control.⁸

In ‘Dura and the problem of Parthian art’, Rostovtzeff stood up for the artistic and political independence of the Parthian rulers with respect to Greece and Rome. In order to substantiate the independence of Parthian art, Rostovtzeff downplayed Greek influence, pointed to the continuity with the Achaemenid tradition and pointed out its highly original character. In Rostovtzeff’s view, it was Parthia that first started a national Iranian reaction against the predominance of Greek art and thereby revived Iranian culture.⁹ The problem of Parthian art, at the time when Rostovtzeff wrote his article, was that apart from a few coins, hardly any works of art from the Arsacid court were known to have survived.¹⁰ In order to reconstruct this dynastic art, Rostovtzeff used the remains from Dura-Europos, complemented with monuments from other cities on the westernmost border of the Parthian empire, such as Palmyra, Edessa and Hatra.¹¹ Rostovtzeff argued that the monuments from these cities display similar stylistic features because they were all inspired by the art of a shared centre: the Parthian court in Ctesiphon. This art has been lost, but Rostovtzeff argued that the communal characteristics of the monuments from Dura, Hatra, Palmyra and Edessa make it possible to establish its main features. These are two-dimensionality, paratactic rendering of the human body, emphasis on the details of elaborate jewellery and clothing, linear rather than plastic detail, row composition, isocephaly and the frontal representation of both human and divine figures, even in narrative representations.¹²

⁸ Rawlinson (1873) ch. 22, 372–93.

⁹ Rostovtzeff (1935) 295–6.

¹⁰ The first Parthian capital, Bagir or ancient Nisa, had been discovered by the Russians in 1934, but this material had not yet been published. Interestingly, Rostovtzeff referred to the announcement of this discovery in the *Pravda* of 20 November 1934, which he, being a native Russian, was capable of reading: Rostovtzeff (1935) 158, n. 1. One cannot help wondering what the study of Parthian art would have looked like had Nisa been found ten years earlier, for the works of art from this city point to a culture that was profoundly influenced by Hellenistic art.

¹¹ The monuments from Dura are central to his discussion. Rostovtzeff was particularly well acquainted with the spectacular finds from Dura-Europos, since from 1928 he had been in charge of the excavations conducted there by Yale University and the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. The monuments from the other cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert were given far less importance in his article. As Rostovtzeff himself noted, (1935) 157, the study of Hatra was only in the preliminary stages when he wrote his article. The same holds true for the mosaics from Edessa. In fact, it was mainly the figurative arts from Palmyra that were compared with monuments from Dura.

¹² Rostovtzeff (1935) 182, 235–8.

On the whole, this results in a spiritual beauty, a denial of corporal beauty that is a conscious negation of the principles of Greek art.¹³

Most of these characteristics, Rostovtzeff argued, had long been common in Oriental art. Parthian art displays Babylonian, Assyrian, Iranian and Greek influences.¹⁴ There is one feature, however, that Rostovtzeff considered to be an innovation: the strict frontal representation of human and divine figures.¹⁵ Because of this innovative trait, Rostovtzeff argued that Parthian art can be considered a true style. The origins of the artistic convention of frontal representation are, in his opinion, to be sought with Iranian nomads in South Russia:¹⁶ when the Arsacids conquered Mesopotamia, they succumbed briefly to the charm of Greek art, but with the growth of their national consciousness they returned to some of the principles of their ancestral art, one of which was the principle of frontal representation of divine and human figures.¹⁷

The primary aim of Rostovtzeff's study was to liberate Parthian art from Greek and Roman art and to study it in its own right. In this respect, his work was connected with a general trend in the humanities in the later twentieth century, in which Eurocentrism was rejected and non-western cultures came to be studied for their own sake.¹⁸ Without doubt, Rostovtzeff's attempt to emancipate the art of the Parthians greatly contributed to the lasting popularity of his work, especially since it resulted in the creation of an independent academic discipline. This is possibly why several fundamental issues were hardly tackled in the debate on Parthian art that followed the publication of Rostovtzeff's article in 1935. The great majority of later studies subscribed to the stylistic characteristics of Parthian art as defined by Rostovtzeff.¹⁹ The debate largely concentrated on the source and development of Parthian art, and the origin and meaning of what is still commonly considered its most essential trait: frontal representation.

The work of Daniel Schlumberger was a milestone in the history of the study of Parthian art.²⁰ Schlumberger argued that only figurative works of art from the cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert dated to the

¹³ *Ibid.* 237.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 189.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 236.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 239–41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 294: 'in the second and first centuries BC the Parthians absorbed a good deal of Greek "poison"'.
¹⁸ In most academic disciplines, this move starts later, following the period of decolonization after World War II. No doubt Rostovtzeff's love and respect for indigenous cultures is related to his Russian origin and his position as a Russian scholar among Eurocentric scholars.

¹⁹ See above, n. 2.
²⁰ In particular Schlumberger (1960) 253–92; *id.* (1969); *id.* (1983) 1050.

first three centuries AD can be labelled 'Parthian' in Rostovtzeff's sense, because only these monuments display the stylistic characteristics that Rostovtzeff considered to be typical of Parthian art.²¹ Like Rostovtzeff, Schlumberger argued that these characteristics can be found in all the figurative arts.²² The most decisive characteristic of Parthian art, frontal representation, only became obligatory around the beginning of the Christian era. Whereas Rostovtzeff stated that this trait was of Iranian origin, Schlumberger argued for a Hellenistic source. In his view, the inspiration for this innovation came from the Hellenistic East and mirrored the art of the Arsacid court in Ctesiphon.²³

Most scholars after Schlumberger rejected the idea of a cultural Arsacid centre.²⁴ They argued that any reconstruction of the art of the Arsacid court is bound to remain hypothetical, because finds from political and cultural centres in Parthian Mesopotamia are extremely rare. Even the exact location of the Arsacid capital Ctesiphon is as yet unknown. Some scholars concluded from the scarcity of the finds that no such dynastic art ever existed and that the Parthians were too weak politically to exert cultural influence over their subjects.²⁵

Instead of seeking the source of Parthian art in an imperial centre, it has become fashionable to stress the artistic independence in the so-called frontier cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert during the first three centuries AD. The characteristics of Parthian art that Rostovtzeff first formulated are still considered an adequate description of the figurative arts from cities such as Dura-Europos, Palmyra, Hatra and Edessa. All these cities are thought to belong to the same cultural orbit, and their monuments are believed to testify to an artistic *koinè* in the visual arts dated to the first three centuries AD.²⁶ Following Rostovtzeff, archaeologists state

²¹ Id. (1969) 73–5.

²² *Ibid.* 73. Architecture is an exception to this rule. In this field, Rome did have a profound influence on Palmyra: id. (1960) 282–3.

²³ Id. (1969) 281; id. (1969) 75.

²⁴ Will (1959) 125–35 was one of the first to deny this imperial artistic centre. Cf. also Drijvers (1977) 177; Colledge (1977) 142; Schippmann (1980) 97–8; Tubach (1986) 244–5; Ploug (1988) 129–39; Mathiesen (1992) 13.

²⁵ This idea was promoted above all by the Sasanian dynasty that succeeded the house of the Arsacids and claimed to restore a centralised kingdom with a centralised church in Iran. Due to the lack of Parthian sources, it is difficult to argue against this view. However, the fact that this idea was advocated by the successors of the Parthians, who used the argument to legitimate their own power and rule, calls for prudence: De Jong (2004) 2–3, and Curtis (2007) 20–1. Keal (1989) is less cautious.

²⁶ Kraeling (1956) 381–4, whose stylistic analysis of the synagogue paintings leans heavily upon Rostovtzeff's work. Drijvers (1976) 7–8; id. (1977) 177; Colledge (1977) 142; Tubach (1986) 244–5; Ploug (1988) 129–39; Drijvers (1990) 69; Mathiesen (1992); Millar (1993) 329; Sommer (2005a) 406.

that the overriding characteristic of this style is frontal representation of both human and divine figures. Most scholars now leave the question of the origin of this stylistic trait undecided and concentrate instead on its significance in the context of the Syrian–Mesopotamian cities.²⁷

Since the features listed by Rostovtzeff are still considered typical of the figurative art of cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert, some scholars retain the term ‘Parthian art’ when speaking of art from the cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert. They do stress, however, that this art has nothing to do with Parthia proper.²⁸ Others have chosen to confine the term to art from cities in the Parthian empire.²⁹ As a result, monuments from Palmyra and Dura are omitted from these discussions. After all, Palmyra was part of the Roman empire from the early first century AD onwards, and Dura was only ruled by the Parthians from about 114 BC until AD 165. By far the majority of the figurative monuments from Dura are dated to the third century AD, when the city was ruled by the Romans. Generally speaking, ethnic designations such as Roman or Greek art are historical notions that are used in a geographical and political sense. It is, therefore, utterly confusing to use the term ‘Parthian art’ for art from cities that are for the greater part located outside the Parthian empire. This, together with the fact that the art from the imperial court is unknown, makes it preferable to omit the label ‘Parthian’ when talking of the art from the Syrian–Mesopotamian cities.

Methodological and Historical Objections

Although many historians now restrict the term Parthian art to the Parthian empire, Rostovtzeff’s stylistic principles of Parthian art are still upheld and applied to the art from all the cities of the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert.

²⁷ So far, three main theories have been formulated to explain the phenomenon. First, it has been argued that this stylistic feature is an expression of national pride, a manifestation of a local cultural and religious identity: Patrich (1990) 165–6; Elsner (1998) 115–38. Second, it was proposed that the use of frontality was a means of establishing direct, magical and religious communication between the figures in a work of art and the spectator: Avi-Yonah (1961) 71–93; Colledge (1976) 126–7; Pietrzykowski (1985) 55–9. Third, the frontal representations of figures in reliefs are thought to have replaced statues in the round: Gawlikowski (1981) 20–1; Drijvers (1990) 75–6. This replacement of idols by icons is thought to reflect a spiritualisation of religion. According to some, this religious attitude is linked to the nomadic background of the people in this region: Weidemann (1971) 146–78; Ploug (1988) 129–39; Mathiesen (1992) 35.

²⁸ Will (1992) 118–19.

²⁹ Colledge (1977) 138–44; Mathiesen (1992) 9; Downey (1987) 580–5. They all stress the stylistic diversity of Parthian art in the immense region that once belonged to the Parthian empire.

The so-called stylistic *koinè* in these cities is, however, questionable for methodological as well as historical reasons. Rostovtzeff formulated his principles of Parthian art in reaction to the presumed superiority of classical culture. He arrived at the independence of this culture by turning around the arguments of his adversaries. As a result, Rostovtzeff's own views were as Eurocentric as the views he opposed.

The western bias of Rostovtzeff's view is best illustrated by the overriding importance he attached to frontal representation. In Rostovtzeff's view, this is a new and unique feature of Parthian art that testifies to the creative genius of the Parthians. Because of this new and creative feature, Parthian art can be considered a style in its own right.³⁰ Obviously, this argument was designed to undermine the presumed creative superiority of the Greeks. However, in his attempt to overrule this Eurocentric concept, Rostovtzeff built on the same assumptions as his adversaries. The appraisal of creativity and uniqueness reflects typical western notions about art, in which innovation is highly valued. In many cultures, however, artistic innovation is not considered important. In most periods in the ancient Near East, tradition and continuity, rather than creativity and renewal, were crucial to the appreciation of the visual arts.³¹ Furthermore, recent studies in the process of cultural interaction stress that it is perfectly possible to create a new and highly individual style by combining elements of diverse origin into a new pattern.³²

It is questionable whether frontal representation has the overriding importance in Parthian art that Rostovtzeff and most subsequent researchers have attached to it. They argued that frontality is the most important feature of Parthian art because it is new and cannot be found in the preceding and subsequent periods.³³ This uniqueness indeed makes frontal representation an important stylistic device that art historians can use to tell the art of one period from the other. However, this need not imply that

³⁰ Rostovtzeff (1935) 236.

³¹ Bahrani (2003) 73–95, 203.

³² Already stressed by Drijvers (1980) 17–18. In recent studies, this process of cultural interaction is referred to as 'creolisation'. With respect to Roman culture, see Webster (2001) 209–25. Although I agree with the description of the process, I find the term creolisation highly confusing and misleading when applied to ancient cultures. For a different approach, however, see the contribution to this volume by M. Sommer.

³³ Most poignantly formulated by Will (1963) 974: 'Poiché nessun periodo artistico anteriore a quello parthico mostra questa caratteristica, si può dire che la frontalità è il suo contrassegno più originale: essa può essere considerata come l'elemento fondamentale di quest'arte' ('Since no artistic period before the Parthian one shows this feature, it can be said that the frontality is its most original characteristic: it can be considered as the key element of this art').

it was also the most important characteristic for the ancient viewer, as all explanations of the phenomenon have thus far presumed.

Although many scholars today deny the existence of a Parthian imperial art and stress the diversity and eclectic character of the figurative arts in the Parthian empire, they retain the idea of an underlying stylistic unity.³⁴ Why they adhere to this scheme is difficult to determine. In Rostovtzeff's view, the diffusion of an imperial Parthian style illustrates the political strength of the Parthian empire. It is possible that the idea that the absence of a well-defined style is a sign of political weakness still lingers on. The notion, however, that cultural influence mirrors political power derives from an outmoded concept of the process of Romanisation, according to which Rome forced its culture and ideas upon its subjects.³⁵ Although both the concept and the content of Romanisation are the subject of a lively debate, most historians now stress the interaction between the centre and the periphery in the spread of Roman culture.³⁶

Recent studies on Romanisation emphasise the role of indigenous elite groups in the process of the spread of Roman culture. This new approach revolves around the idea that the coming of Rome resulted, consciously or unconsciously, in a redirection of social relations within the conquered territories. Roman culture is thought to have played an important part within this redirection. In order to establish and confirm their elevated social position, elite groups aligned their interests with those of Rome. In order to do so, they forged a connection with the Roman rulers so as to become more like them.³⁷ One way of doing this was by adopting or incorporating Roman cultural elements into one's own culture.³⁸ The eagerness of the local elites to adopt Roman culture was in turn determined by the openness of the Roman social system and its willingness to incorporate foreigners who lived up to Roman standards.³⁹ It is likely that Rome deliberately and directly promoted the Romanisation of the local elites, since through them they were able to control the provinces with few people and little money.⁴⁰

³⁴ See above, n. 28.

³⁵ E.g. Haverfield (1923) 11 and 14; Brunt (1974) 267–81; Garnsey and Saller (1987) 186–95.

³⁶ See Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 9–14 for a recent summary of this debate and references for further reading.

³⁷ Derks (1998) 35; Woolf (1998) 7–16, esp. 13; Mattingly (2010) 18, with critical comments, and now also id. (2014) where the author focuses on the idea of Romanisation and its problems as a model.

³⁸ Various possibilities of cultural interaction present themselves; in addition to the option that elements from different cultures blend into a new entity, it is equally possible to suppose that elements survive in plurality alongside each other: Wallace-Hadrill (2008) 13.

³⁹ Hopkins and Burton (1983) esp. 176 and 184–98.

⁴⁰ Hanson (1997) 76–8.

The interplay between central government and local elites in the Roman empire was one of many ways to exercise power over a large region. It is, however, by no means the only way in which empires control their territories.⁴¹ Consequently, the diffusion of culture does not necessarily reflect the power of the centre over the periphery. In fact, the Roman empire seems to have been the exception, not the rule. There have been plenty of powerful, enduring empires with a strong imperial culture that did not influence the territories they conquered. The Achaemenid empire is a case in point. As in the Parthian empire, traces of Achaemenid imperial culture outside the cities in the Iranian heartland are rare. Contrary to what is known of the Parthians, however, the Achaemenids *did* have a pronounced imperial culture. It consciously combined elements from various artistic traditions in the Persian empire, resulting in art with a very distinctive character, designed to express Achaemenid supremacy over the various regions it had conquered.⁴² However, apart from metalwork, coins and carved ivories, we rarely encounter the diffusion of this court art.⁴³ Of course, the possibility remains that these monuments will be found in the future. It is, however, equally possible to suppose that this empire was simply organised differently. I therefore suggest we stop looking for an imperial art in the provinces in order to illustrate the efficiency of Parthian rule.

A Re-evaluation of the Figurative Arts from Dura-Europos

In addition to the methodological and historical objections listed above, it can be shown that Rostovtzeff's criteria and analysis are at odds with the surviving monuments. He argued that a number of the sculptures and all the paintings from Dura are representatives of the same Parthian style.⁴⁴ He furthermore argued that this style did not develop over time and that parallels can be found in Palmyra, Hatra and other cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert. In order to test Rostovtzeff's hypothesis, I shall start with a description of the sculptures and paintings from Dura-Europos and subsequently turn to a comparison with monuments from the other cities. Since Rostovtzeff advanced his hypothesis, our knowledge of the arts of the cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert has increased considerably.

⁴¹ Gosden (2004) has proposed a series of theoretical models to encompass the variation in the manifestations of the cultures of imperial powers in the territories that they rule.

⁴² Root (1979) 309ff.

⁴³ Moorey (1985) 21ff. discusses the specifically Iranian contribution to Achaemenid art and culture. See also Porada (1977) esp. 77ff.

⁴⁴ Rostovtzeff (1935) 256.

New monuments have been discovered, and long known monuments have come to be seen in a different light. A thorough analysis falls beyond the scope of the present article, and what follows should be seen as preliminary remarks that may serve as a starting point for further study.

The style of the sculptures is analysed thoroughly by Susan Downey in her Final Report on the stone and plaster sculptures from Dura-Europos. Downey distinguishes five broad categories that largely correspond to various cultural influences that made themselves felt in the city.⁴⁵ It is noteworthy that there are quite a few sculptures from Dura that cannot be ascribed to any of these categories. There is great variation in the skill of the sculptors who worked at Dura, and quite a few sculptures are so clumsy that it is impossible to ascribe them to one of the stylistic groups listed below. Although only a few sculptures can be dated firmly, it is possible to establish a tentative chronological framework. Downey is certainly right when she states that the evidence does not suggest a linear development, and suggests that several of these groups co-existed in time. In spite of this, it is possible to distinguish between work that was executed before the middle of the second century AD and sculptures that were made in the last century of the city's existence.

The first group that is clearly distinguishable consists of sculptures that are stylistically related to Palmyra. This group comprises five works of Palmyrene limestone, fabricated by Palmyrene craftsmen,⁴⁶ and works of white limestone that were made locally and that were clearly influenced by sculptures from Palmyra.⁴⁷ At least four of the Palmyrene reliefs were erected by Palmyrenes who resided in Dura, so it seems that these works served the needs of the Palmyrene community. Whereas all imported sculptures from Palmyra are dated after the middle of the second century AD, most local sculptures are dated early, around the middle of the first century AD.⁴⁸ A few works can be dated later, around AD 169.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁵ Downey (1977) 227–93.

⁴⁶ The three reliefs from the temple of the Gadde, dated to AD 159: Dirven (1999) 245–53 = *Rep.* VII–VIII, 258–64; the relief that was dedicated to Nemesis in AD 245: Dirven (1999) 328–31, pl. XVI = *Rep.* I, 65–8, pl. IV.1); and the statue of a girl: Downey (1977) 110–12 = *Rep.* V, 56–8, pl. XVII.1. On the group of Palmyrene sculpture from Dura in general, see Downey (1977) 253–5.

⁴⁷ Downey (1977) 238–245.

⁴⁸ A number of reliefs that belong to this early group are dated by an inscription: the relief of Aphlad (AD 54) and the relief dedicated to Zeus Kyrios-Baalshamin (AD 31). Three more reliefs belong to the same group: a fragmentary relief of Atargatis from the temple of Adonis: Downey (1977) no. 33; a stele with a figure of Hadad from a private house: *ibid.* no. 46; as well as a fragmentary relief of a man leading a camel from the temple of Zeus Megistos: *ibid.* no. 44). The five statues that Downey assigns to the second group, cf. *ibid.* nos 51, 52, 88, 97 and 101, are all far more fragmentary.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 244.

relief that pictures the god Aphlad from AD 59 illustrates this style well [PLATE XI]. The reliefs that belong to this group are characterised by a hieratic formalism and neat, precise carving, which differs significantly from the other Durene sculptures. Characteristic are the staring eyes, as well as the minute rendering of jewellery, weapons and other details. Although most figures face full front and stand rather stiffly, the drapery reflects the shape of the body underneath. The pattern of the drapery of the more recent sculptures, however, is further removed from Greek conventions and is less natural in appearance.

A second group of sculptures is related to Graeco-Roman works. They are either imported works or local sculptures inspired by Graeco-Roman models. Imported sculptures in the Greek style are rare in Dura, but classical models were quite frequently imitated, with varying degrees of success.⁵⁰ Several works in Graeco-Roman style were probably made in the first century AD, but most are dated to the later years of Dura's existence. Hence one cannot postulate a development from Graeco-Roman to Oriental. On the contrary, it is likely that the arrival of the Roman army brought a new influx of classical influences. Particularly prominent are the figures of Aphrodite that were found in large numbers in Dura.⁵¹

Of special note is the work known as the relief of Azzanathkona, a stele in the shape of a Roman funerary stele [PLATE XII].⁵² It depicts an enthroned goddess being crowned by a man who is represented in a much larger scale than she. The man is pictured in profile. In the field above the two figures is a man leading a bull. The unique form of the stele, the use of profile for some of the figures, their variation in height and the suggestion of movement all point to the influence of the western world.⁵³ The stele, however, is undoubtedly of local workmanship. It is not dated, but probably belongs to the period of Roman occupation.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ The elegant statue of Aphrodite that was found by Cumont in the building known as the temple of Artemis was imported: Cumont (1926) 206, pls LXXX–LXXXI. Works inspired by classical models are listed and analysed by Downey (1977) 246–50.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 248–50.

⁵² Funerary reliefs from Apamea, Seleucia on the Euphrates and other sites in north Syria, all dated to the Roman period, closely resemble the shape of this stele and have the same fluted columns with Corinthian capitals and triangular pediment on top. Examples can be found in Parlasca (1982).

⁵³ Perkins (1973) 91–3 and Downey (1977) 251–2 state that this relief combines Graeco-Roman and Oriental elements. Both authors label the figure of the goddess as being Oriental in form. However, if we assume that this copies a cult statue, possibly from the temple itself, this Oriental form is readily explained.

⁵⁴ Both Hopkins, in *Rep.* V, 176 and Perkins (1973) 91 date the relief much earlier, in the first century AD. They take it that this was the original cult relief of the pronaos of the temple of

The third style group consists of a large group of reliefs and heads of male figures that are mostly carved from poor quality local gypsum.⁵⁵ According to Downey, all works that belong to this group can be dated to the middle of the second century and later.⁵⁶ Probably, therefore, this style is characteristic of sculptures from the last century of the city's existence. The major characteristics of this group are flatness and linearity. The figures lack any naturalism. The faces are flat with wedge-shaped noses and blank, ball-shaped eyes. The drapery is treated in a very linear and unconvincing manner; folds are incised and not modelled. The relief depicting the god Yarhibol that was found in the so-called temple of the Gadde is a telling example [PLATE XIII].⁵⁷ Linearity is also characteristic of several male heads that belonged to free-standing statues. Downey writes that this group is characterised by flat, almost concave profiles, flat eyes that slant strongly down towards the pointed outer corners, and heavy eyebrows.⁵⁸

Dura-Europos is one of the few cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert that has yielded a great number of wall paintings. As yet, no comprehensive publication and stylistic analysis of the paintings from Dura has been published.⁵⁹ The following brief description by no means claims to be a thorough analysis, and mainly elaborates on the preliminary study of the paintings by Frank Brown, one of the excavators.⁶⁰ Brown rightly notes that the majority of the paintings date from the last years of the city's existence, between AD 240 and 250. Only a handful of paintings can be dated earlier, probably to the first century AD. From a stylistic point of view these early paintings ought to be distinguished from the later paintings, which consist

Azzanthkona (W9), which was founded around this time. However, it is of course equally possible that the relief was placed in the pronaos at a later period. During the period of Roman occupation, this temple was used by the Roman army, which makes a Roman date of the relief plausible. On the temple and the place in which the relief was found, see *Rep.* V, 171. On the later reuse of the building by the military, see *ibid.* 131–6. Welles (1969) 58 already suggested that the presence of the Romans affected the decoration and texts of this part of the sanctuary.

⁵⁵ The groups known as the Mithras–Sa'ad and Asheru group and the Zeus Megistos group: Downey (1977) 256–64. To the Mithras–Sa'ad and Asheru group, listed by *ibid.* 259, one can add a relief that was recently found in a house in block M5: Dirven (1999) 275–8, pl. X.

⁵⁶ Downey (1977) 229. Only three reliefs can be dated exactly: the two reliefs dedicated to Mithras in AD 168 and 170 respectively and the relief dedicated to Bel, dated to 173–4. The contexts in which the other reliefs were found suggest a late date for the remainder of this group.

⁵⁷ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 264–5, pl. XXXV, 2; Downey (1977) 62–4, pl. 47; Dirven (1999) 253–4, pl. VI.

⁵⁸ Downey (1977) 229.

⁵⁹ The final report on the paintings from Dura that was announced by Brilliant (1973) 30 never materialised.

⁶⁰ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 209–10. A short overview of the paintings from Dura in the context of Syria as a whole is given by Balty (1989) 525–31.

of paintings that were influenced by Rome and paintings that are predominantly local in style.⁶¹

Among the oldest paintings are the frescoes from the naos of the building known as the temple of Bel or the Palmyrene Gods, and of the temple of Zeus Theos.⁶² The early paintings from the pronaos of the temple of the Gadde belong to the same group, but since too little remains, they are omitted from the present discussion.⁶³ Paintings that belong to this group cover a time span of about one hundred and fifty years: the earliest paintings date from the second half of the first century, whereas the last probably date from the end of the second century AD.⁶⁴ In both the temple of Bel and the temple of Zeus Theos, the remnants of a painted cult image were found at the back wall of the naos, whereas figures of worshippers adorn the side walls of the naos and the pronaos. Unfortunately, very little remains of the two cult images, so that it is virtually impossible to give an adequate description of their subject or style.⁶⁵ The little that remains, however, does show that at least two of Rostovtzeff's characteristics of Parthian art do not

⁶¹ This distinction was already made by Cumont (1926) 141 and F. Brown in *Rep.* VII–VIII, 190, both of whom stressed the more Hellenistic character of the older paintings. Rostovtzeff (1935) 256–7 claimed that all Durene paintings are representatives of the same style. He was followed by Schlumberger (1960) 283–5; Kraeling (1956) 381 and Perkins (1973) 68. Note, however, that in a later publication, Rostovtzeff (1938a) 144, n. 34 subscribed to Brown's dichotomy in the paintings of Dura. Not surprisingly, Rostovtzeff (1938a) 78 disagreed with Cumont's characterisation of the older style as Graeco-Syrian.

⁶² For a description of the paintings from the temple of Bel, see Cumont (1926) 41–84, pls XXXI–XLVIII. Several of these were already described by Breasted (1924). For the paintings from the temple of Zeus Theos, see *Rep.* VII–VIII, 196–207, pls XXI–XXV.

⁶³ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 271–2.

⁶⁴ The date of these paintings is debated. On the basis of an inscription, Cumont dated the painting of Konon in the naos of the temple of Bel to around AD 75. He assumed that the fragmentary painting at the back wall of the naos, the painting on the pilaster of the south wall and the painting on the south wall of the pronaos date from the same period: Cumont (1926) 57, 83–4 and 141. Breasted dated the paintings from the naos and the pronaos to the same period, whereas Perkins (1973) 41, opted for about AD 100. The paintings from the temple of Zeus Theos are dated to the beginning of the second century, probably AD 120–1, following the dedicatory inscription of the naos: *Rep.* VII–VIII, 214. The paintings from the temple of Bel possibly date from different periods. The painting on the south wall of the pronaos of the temple of Bel is signed by Ilasamos: Cumont (1926) 361–2, no. 6. Another painter with the name Ilasamos is attested in the Palmyrene inscription from the building known as the house of the banquet, dated to AD 194 (*PAT* 1091). The later date is confirmed by the shape of the cartouche in which the inscription is written, which is typical of the Roman era. Hence it is possible that the painting from the pronaos of the temple of Bel is the work of the same painter. Unfortunately, the paintings no longer exist and one cannot make a profound stylistic analysis on the basis of the photographs published by Cumont. Enough remains to establish that it differs from the painting from the house of the banquets. However, in my view this is not necessarily the result of different artists, but may be due to the quality of execution.

⁶⁵ It ought to be stressed that the traditional reconstruction of the back wall of the naos of the temple of Zeus Theos that was published by Brown, *Rep.* VII–VIII, 197, fig. 50, combines

apply here. First, the individual figures that adorned the back wall of the naos of the temple of Bel differed in size.⁶⁶ Hence the rule of isoccephaly was not followed here. Second, the faces of the Victoria figures from the back wall of the naos of the temple of Zeus Theos are in profile.⁶⁷ This suggests that the rule of frontal representation was far less compelling than Rostovtzeff suggests.

The style of the early paintings is best described on the basis of the portraits that adorned the side walls of the naos and pronaos of both temples. When Captain Murphy discovered the Konon fresco in the temple of Bel, the faces and colours were in an excellent state of preservation. Unfortunately, all of the painting's former glory is now gone.⁶⁸ Even the painted photographs that were made by Breasted in the early twenties of the last century are but a faint reflection of their former quality [PLATE XIV].⁶⁹ Although the portraits from the temple of Zeus Theos were much more damaged when they were found than the Konon fresco, these portraits of Baribonnaea and of another woman [PLATE XV] are now the best witnesses of the early style of painting.⁷⁰

The paintings are rich in colour and depth and the brushwork is fine and detailed. Cumont rightly noted that the faces of the various life-size individuals received by far the most attention and look like genuine portraits.⁷¹ To this effect, the painter has used pink under-painting, upon which features and shades are carefully modelled in tones of red-brown. The deepest shadows are almost black, and a lighter shade is used for the highlights on the cheek, nose and chin. The eyes are large and staring. Details and ornamentation, such as headgear and jewellery, are rendered in great detail.

fragments from the temple of Bel and the temple of Zeus Theos and cannot be used to reconstruct the cult in this temple. See also the contribution to this volume by S. B. Downey.

⁶⁶ Cumont (1926) 74–6, pls XLII–XLIII. The fragments show a giant foot and the lower part of a leg clad in trousers, combined with the lower bodies of three small figures.

⁶⁷ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 199–200, pl. XXI, 4–5 and pl. XXV.

⁶⁸ The painting, in a deplorable condition, is on show in the national museum in Damascus. It has recently received important treatment by the Mission Franco-Syrienne d'Europos-Doura.

⁶⁹ Breasted (1924) 76. At least one of the figures in the fresco had already been mutilated when Breasted arrived to study it in 1921: *ibid.* 59. When Franz Cumont finally had the chance to study it in November 1922, the whole painting was already terribly mutilated: writing of Cumont to Breasted, published in *ibid.* 3–4. The photographs taken by Breasted are therefore the main documents for the study of these pictures; they were republished by Cumont (1926) 41–56, pls XXX–XLII. Cumont's description of the paintings is based on the pictures and Breasted's notes.

⁷⁰ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 205–6, frontispiece and pl. XXIII and pl. XXIV, 1. The fragments are now in the storage of the YUAG. I would like to thank Susan Matheson, the curator of ancient art at the Yale Art Gallery, for enabling me to study them in person.

⁷¹ Cumont (1926) 47; Balty (1989) 528.

In contrast to the faces, which are painstakingly rendered, the other flesh parts are hardly modelled by shading and look rather stocky and hieratic. Bodies are treated as lay figures upon which to hang opulent drapery and jewellery.

The second group of paintings comprises by far the most works. The available evidence suggests this style started around AD 200 and continued until the fall of the city in ca. AD 256. Early instances include the paintings from the building known as the house of the banquets, dated by an inscription to AD 194,⁷² paintings from the middle mithraeum⁷³ and those from the temple of Adonis.⁷⁴ Most works, however, are dated to the last years of Dura's existence. The best known are paintings made in AD 240–50: the paintings from the east wall of the pronaos of the temple of Bel,⁷⁵ from room K of the same temple,⁷⁶ the house of the scribes,⁷⁷ the synagogue,⁷⁸ the late mithraeum⁷⁹ and the Christian baptistery.⁸⁰ Admittedly, one can make subdivisions in this group. However, differences are due more to quality of execution than style. For instance, the paintings from the temple of Adonis, room K in the temple of Bel or the Christian baptistery, are more linear than the paintings from the middle mithraeum, the house of the Roman scribes and the synagogue, and fewer colours have been used in them.⁸¹ In spirit, however, they are representatives of the same style. This is clear if one compares the rendering of the heads of the prophets in the synagogue with the head of Mithras in the later mithraeum and the heads from the house of the Roman scribes [PLATES XVI–XVIII].⁸²

The style of these paintings is characterised by linearity and flatness. Faces are rendered schematically and lack individual qualities. In most cases, faces and bodies are hardly modelled by shading. When shading is applied, it is simply by means of brush strokes in a darker colour. In comparison with the older paintings, far less attention is paid to details such as

⁷² *Rep.* VI, 146–67.

⁷³ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 101–4 (description) and 115–16 (stylistic analysis). Cf. Cumont (1975) 192.

⁷⁴ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 158–63, fig. 44 and pls XIX–XX.

⁷⁵ Cumont (1926) 84–122, pls XLVIII–LIII.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 122–34, pls LV–LVIII.

⁷⁷ *Rep.* VI, 275–88.

⁷⁸ Kraeling (1956) 382–4.

⁷⁹ Cumont (1975) 151–214.

⁸⁰ Kraeling (1967) 206–8.

⁸¹ On the higher quality of the paintings from the middle mithraeum: *Rep.* VII–VIII, 115–16, and Cumont (1975) 192–4.

⁸² Contra Rostovtzeff (1935) 280, who compares the heads of the magi in the late mithraeum with the heads in the Konon painting. On the sculpture and paintings of the Dura mithraeum, cf. now also Dirven and McCarty (2014).

jewellery.⁸³ In the background, architecture is lacking. Compared to their predecessors, these paintings are far more linear, and the faces of figures lack individual qualities. This even holds true for the best examples, such as the portraits of Moses and the prophets in the synagogue.⁸⁴ Here too we note coarser brushwork, less colour, fewer details and less modelling. Most of the figures are indeed represented facing full front. There are, however, several exceptions to this rule. First, the rule is abandoned with figures that derive from classical models, such as the Psyche figures in the synagogue paintings.⁸⁵ Second, several paintings that probably belong to some kind of a narrative cycle deviate from the rule of frontal representation.⁸⁶

A third group of paintings is characterised by Graeco-Roman influence. All date to the last years of Dura. This influence is not only apparent in their subject matter, but also in their brushwork, which is much looser than in the paintings that belong to the second group. Since these paintings were in all likelihood made locally, the differences from the second group are not always clear, and mutual influence cannot be excluded.⁸⁷ Prime examples of this style can be found on the Roman shields that have been found in Dura.⁸⁸ The painting of Aphrodite in the building known as the house of the scribes is another example of this style.⁸⁹ Several scenes that adorned the wall of the pronaos of the temple of Bel also seem to display characteristics that were inspired by Rome.⁹⁰

⁸³ The deviating character of these paintings is pointed out by most scholars. Rostovtzeff (1935) 256, who stresses the singular style of the Dura paintings, is a noteworthy exception. Frank Brown, in *Rep.* VII–VIII, 21, is evasive when he writes that ‘its distinction is stylistic in the narrower sense’.

⁸⁴ Kraeling (1956) 371, pl. XLVIII and pls LXXVI–LXXVIII.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* pl. LXX.

⁸⁶ This is the case in several paintings that originate from the middle mithraeum: *Rep.* VII–VIII, 101–4; the paintings from the temple of the Gadde: *Rep.* VII–VIII, 239 and 272–4, pl. XXVIII, 1–3, and Dirven (1999) 256–8, fig. 9a–e; and the enigmatic scenes from the pronaos of the temple of Bel: Cumont (1926) 84–9, pl. XLVIII, on which see now the contribution to this volume by M. K. Heyn. In my view, however, the mystery still remains to be solved.

⁸⁷ For this reason, Brilliant (1973) 29 notes that none of the paintings from Dura can be labelled provincial Roman. However, in my view, the paintings listed above show a greater stylistic affiliation with Roman art than the more local style and may therefore be labelled examples of Roman provincial art.

⁸⁸ *Rep.* VI, 456–66, and *Rep.* VII–VIII, 331–49. Cf. James (2004) 176–87, esp. nos 616–17, 629 and 634. Rostovtzeff (1935) 221 noted that the technique of the shields was encaustic and related to the technique used in Egypt for the famous Fayoum portraits. Since they have little in common with the mural paintings from Dura, he suggested the shields were imported. Like Rostovtzeff, Perkins (1973) 33–4 noted that these shields were based on western prototypes, but in contrast to him, she assumed they were made locally. Simon James confirmed that it is extremely plausible that these shields were fabricated in Dura (pers. com.).

⁸⁹ *Rep.* VI, 279–82, pl. XLIII. Note that the painted plaster ceiling blocks from this house are very similar to the slabs that decorated the ceiling of the synagogue.

⁹⁰ Cumont (1926) 114–22, pl. XLIX, pls LII–LIV.

Dura-Europos, Palmyra and Hatra: A Re-assessment

In conclusion, we may say that the study of the available monuments shows, first, that there was stylistic diversity within one medium and, second, that these styles did develop over time. In both paintings and sculptures, we note a more refined style in the period that the city was under Parthian control. Once Dura came under Roman rule, this style gradually disappeared and was replaced by work that is more linear and flat.

In the case of the sculptures, it is clear that the early style was inspired by works from Palmyra. Rostovtzeff already noted the similarity between the sculptures from Dura and Palmyra, but he downplayed the possible influence of Palmyra on Dura by assuming that both styles derived from a common, eastern prototype.⁹¹ In order to prove that Dura was inspired by Mesopotamia instead of by Palmyra, he stated that the sculptures from Dura display certain essential peculiarities of style and appearance that are not found in Palmyrene sculpture. In his view, Dura is culturally closer to Mesopotamia than Palmyra.⁹² The available evidence contradicts this hypothesis. Not only are the sculptures from Dura very similar to a class of early Palmyrene sculptures, but contemporary sculptures from Mesopotamia are of a different character.⁹³ The differences in style between first-century sculptures from Dura and Palmyra and early sculptures from Hatra are particularly illustrative in this regard.⁹⁴

Compared to the first-century works from Palmyra and Dura, early sculptures from Hatra testify to more classical influences.⁹⁵ This is especially clear from the sculptural decoration of the great iwans in the central

⁹¹ The most telling example of Rostovtzeff's attempt to minimise Palmyrene influence is his assumption that the reliefs from the temple of the Gadde are not Palmyrene: Rostovtzeff (1935) 233. However, the Palmyrene workmanship of these sculptures is beyond doubt.

⁹² Rostovtzeff (1935) 232, 238 and 295.

⁹³ On the similarities between this class of early Dura sculptures and Palmyrene sculpture, see Downey (1977) 239–42.

⁹⁴ A comprehensive study of the sculptures from Hatra is thus far lacking. The present author is preparing a publication on the sculptures from Hatra, but the political situation in Iraq obstructs its completion. The most complete publication to date still is Safar and Mustafa (1974) (in Arabic).

⁹⁵ This contradicts the conclusion of Rostovtzeff (1935) 261, who stated that classical influences diminish as one moves eastwards. It is not quite clear where the western influence in Hatra at the end of the first century comes from. Two possibilities present themselves. First, it may be the remnant of Hellenistic traditions that loomed large in Mesopotamia. Second, these influences may originate from the West, in particular from Antioch. Since several elements (e.g. the busts that adorn the arches) are typical of Rome, I prefer the second hypothesis.

temenos, which are among the earliest datable works in the city.⁹⁶ A considerable number of the busts that adorn the arches of the iwans do not face full front and have faces that are more naturalistic than those from Palmyra and Dura. One of the door lintels depicts a centauiromachia that is full of life and movement and that contains figures that are represented in profile.⁹⁷ Hence the early Hatrene sculptures lack two main principles of Parthian art as established by Rostovtzeff: love of detail and frontal representation of human figures. This suggests that these principles originated in the West rather than the East.

The source of inspiration for the paintings that are more or less contemporary with the early sculptures from Dura is far more difficult to establish, since no contemporary paintings are known from Palmyra or other cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert. Frank Brown's hypothesis, that they reflect late-Hellenistic eastern models that were current in the Near East before the arrival of Rome, is not substantiated by any evidence.⁹⁸ Franz Cumont was of the opinion that these Syro-Hellenistic paintings were influenced by painters from Palmyra.⁹⁹ His hypothesis was largely inspired by material from the building known as the temple of Bel, which subsequently turned out to be of a later date. There is no firm indication that Palmyrenes were involved in the decoration of this temple before Dura was conquered by the Romans in AD 165.¹⁰⁰

Be that as it may, Palmyra indeed yields the closest parallels to the painted portraits from Dura. From the 'tomb of the three brothers' in Palmyra come several portraits of the deceased that are dated to AD 160–91.¹⁰¹ Although they are dated later than the frescoes from Dura, they resemble the latter with respect to their portrait-like quality, frontal representation, clothing and love of detail. Unfortunately, the paintings from the tomb of the three brothers are rather faded and one can no longer see whether the painters used the same multi-layered technique as in Dura. Malcolm Colledge pointed out that the portraits from the tomb of the three brothers are closely related to the funerary reliefs of the deceased from the oasis. Of course, one has to be extremely careful in comparing the style of paintings to sculptures. However, on the present evidence, the sculpted funerary

⁹⁶ On the decoration of the arches of the great iwans, see Von Gall (1970) 7–32. Other remarkable instances of Roman influence in the architectural decoration of this temple: Andrae (1912) 149, figs 249–51 and figs 259–60.

⁹⁷ Sommer (2003a) fig. 96. These classical motifs were adopted by local Hatrene artists and figure in sculptures of a later date: Safar and Mustafa (1974) fig. 260 = Downey (1969) pl. XX.

⁹⁸ Brown, *Rep.* VII–VIII, 209–10.

⁹⁹ Cumont (1926) 58 and 142, where he speaks of a Syro-Hellenistic style.

¹⁰⁰ Dirven (1999) 293–5.

¹⁰¹ Colledge (1976) figs 115–18; Balty (1989) 531–4.

busts from Palmyra are the monuments that are closest in style and spirit to the Dura portraits.¹⁰²

The influence that Palmyra exerted on Dura is confirmed by the terracotta plaques and medallions that were found in Dura.¹⁰³ With the exception of Palmyra, mould-made terracotta plaques are rare in other Near Eastern sites in the Greek, Parthian and Roman periods. The presence of identical terracotta works in Dura and Palmyra shows the close cultural connection between the two cities. This connection is confirmed by the Palmyrene community that lived in Dura from at least the first century BC onwards and that is attested in the city until its fall in ca. AD 256.¹⁰⁴ Thanks to the emerging caravan trade, Palmyra developed into a leading cultural and artistic centre from the beginning of the first century onwards. It is feasible that the creative outburst that took place in the oasis exercised a profound cultural influence on Dura, which was a modest provincial town at the time and not a flowering artistic centre like Palmyra.¹⁰⁵

During the last hundred years of the city's existence, the style of both the sculptures and the paintings changed considerably. The more refined style disappeared and was replaced by work that is characterised by a flat and linear style. Susan Downey established that the style of the sculptures that belong to the group known as the 'Mithras-Sa'ad and Asheru group' has nothing in common with work from Palmyra.¹⁰⁶ Nor is there any comparable group of sculptures in Hatra. Since parallels from other Syrian-Mesopotamian cities are also lacking, it is safe to assume that this style reflects a local artistic development.¹⁰⁷

According to Frank Brown, the second group of paintings from Dura was the result of a new wave of western influence that arrived via Palmyra.

¹⁰² In Hatra, where no mural paintings were found inside the temples, life-size statues of people fulfil the same function as the painted portraits in Dura. These statues lack the individual features and stylistic diversity of the Dura paintings and the Palmyrene funerary portraits. The same holds true for the funerary busts in the mosaics from Edessa.

¹⁰³ Downey (1977) 253–60; ead. (2003) 13–15.

¹⁰⁴ On the material pertaining to Palmyrenes in Dura-Europos, see Dirven (1999).

¹⁰⁵ In the introduction to her chapter on Dura-Europos, Wharton (1995) 15–21 sets out to deny the peripheral character of Dura. Although I agree with her analysis of Orientalism and the role it played in analysing the Dura paintings, I believe that artistic creativity in Dura should not be exaggerated. Irrespective of the notion of Orientalism, Dura was a small town that functioned as the provincial centre of the middle Euphrates region.

¹⁰⁶ Downey (1977) 265 points out that there are some Palmyrene sculptures that faintly resemble this group of sculptures from Dura. These, however, are sculptures that were found below the later temple of Bel, i.e. that date before the beginning of our era. This means they predate the period of the cultural flowering of Palmyra, so there can be no connection between the two groups of sculptures.

¹⁰⁷ Contra Rostovtzeff (1935) 224–6, who stated that these sculptures for the most part reflect a style that was current all over Syria in the second and third centuries AD.

Again, our material for comparison is very scarce, since the remainder of the cities in the Syrian–Mesopotamian desert have hardly yielded any paintings. The few paintings that have been preserved in Palmyra testify to a far greater Roman influence than is evident in the paintings from Dura.

The change in Durene painting and sculpture more or less coincides with the coming of Rome in AD 165. However, the arrival of Rome by no means implied the end of contacts with Palmyra. On the contrary, in addition to merchants and other Palmyrenes that kept visiting Dura, many Palmyrene soldiers who served in the Roman army were stationed in Dura. Although the number of Palmyrenes stationed in Dura undoubtedly increased, Palmyrene influence in the visual arts dwindled dramatically. This was probably the result of a combination of economic and social factors. First, it can be seen that the character of Dura-Europos changed dramatically during the time when the city was occupied by the Romans. From a reasonably wealthy provincial city, Dura gradually changed into a frontier fortress with a large Roman garrison.¹⁰⁸ Undoubtedly this had an effect on the standard of living, which was in turn reflected in local artistic production.¹⁰⁹

Conclusion

We may conclude that Rostovtzeff's hypothesis that the figurative arts from Dura-Europos were influenced by Mesopotamia cannot be upheld. Although the works that Rostovtzeff considered the main representatives of 'Parthian art' predominantly date from the time that Dura was under Parthian control, it can be shown that these works were strongly influenced by Palmyra. In this period, Palmyra was politically related to Rome and not to Parthia. Many features in Palmyrene art that were formerly considered prime examples of Parthian art are now deemed the outcome of a meeting of Roman and Graeco-Semitic art, the result of which is typical of Palmyra.¹¹⁰ According to some, this even holds true for frontal representation, still

¹⁰⁸ Dirven (1999) 12.

¹⁰⁹ In addition, we know that many new people came to Dura in the third century, most of whom must have been soldiers. Although they served in the Roman army, these people by no means all originated from the West. The influx of Semitic names suggests that the majority came from Syria. Be that as it may, Roman influences can be detected in several of the paintings from Dura, and hence may have played a role in the formation of this new local style. However, to characterise the later work from Dura as a provincial Roman style would definitely be pushing the evidence too far.

¹¹⁰ On Roman influence in the arts of Palmyra, see Parlasca (1985) 343–56; Sadurska (1988) 75–86; Colledge (1987) 23–8; id. (1996) 363–70; Schmidt-Collinet (1997) 157–77; Schenke

considered by many the main characteristic of Parthian art.¹¹¹ Clearly, therefore, cultural influences did not stop at political borders. The city of Palmyra is considered one of the principal meeting points between East and West. It is via cities like Palmyra that western influences are thought to have penetrated eastwards.¹¹²

(2003) 109–16; De Jong (2007); Balty (2005). Roman influence in the figurative arts of Palmyra was vehemently opposed by Schlumberger (1960) 285. On the (few) Parthian cultural elements in Roman Palmyra, see Colledge (1987) 19–28.

¹¹¹ The first to argue for the Roman origin of frontal representation was Ernest Will. His opinion, Will (1955) 233, was vehemently contested by Schlumberger (1960) 283, n. 2. As Will rightly noted, the way frontal representation was used was typical for the Orient.

¹¹² Colledge (1986) 28. The idea that western art was the main source of inspiration for so-called Parthian art in Mesopotamia can already be found in Ploug (1988) 135 and Mathiesen (1992) 14. Contrary to the present author, however, Mathiesen upholds the notion of a Parthian *koinè* in the figurative arts.

6 | Gesture at Dura-Europos

A New Interpretation of the So-called “Scène Énigmatique”

MAURA K. HEYN

An enigmatic mythological scene is painted on the east wall of the pronaos of the temple of Bel in Dura-Europos.¹ The mural is not well known, and Mikhail Rostovtzeff suggested in 1938 that its interpretation was impossible, since it represented a single episode without context.² However, this paper argues that greater attention to the hand gestures depicted in the painting can shed light on its meaning. It has long been recognized that the hand gestures depicted in ancient art can have special significance. In addition to the symbolic representation of the gesturer’s identity or frame of mind, gestures can also communicate action in a static scene, or draw attention to important details that might otherwise go unnoticed.³ In the scene from the pronaos of the temple of Bel, the hand gestures not only provide clues to the identity of those depicted, they also animate the narration. Comparative evidence from other mural decoration in Dura-Europos, as well as sculpture and mosaics from other sites in the region, strengthen the possibility that the scene depicts the discovery of Ariadne on the island of Naxos by Dionysus.

Description of the Painting

The painting in question is located on the east wall of the pronaos, to the right of the door [PLATE XIX].⁴ It shares a corner with the well-known painting of Julius Terentius pouring a libation while his troops look on,

¹ Yale University Art Gallery, 1932.1205.

² Rostovtzeff (1938a) 121.

³ Brilliant (1963); cf. Aldrete (1999) for function of gesture in oratory and theater; cf. Corbeil (2004) for gesture in ritual activities; for communication of action in a ritual scene, cf. Dirven (2008); cf. Boatwright (2005) 295–304, for the suggestion that the gesture of mother pointing to son emphasized importance of family.

⁴ The mural is about 95 cm long. The lower register is about 42 cm high, not including the 8-cm red band that frames it at the top and bottom. About 40 cm of the upper register remains at its highest point, cf. Cumont (1926) 84–6.

which is on the north wall [PLATE II], and its creation dates to roughly the same period as the Terentius scene: the first half of the third century AD.⁵ The narrative is divided into two registers, each of which is framed with an 8-cm-wide red band. The upper portion of the top register is damaged, but the lower scene is fairly well preserved. This lower register features four figures in an outdoor setting made up of spindly trees. On the left, a person of uncertain gender sits on a large rock or pile of stones. This seated figure has a short, curly hairstyle and does not have facial hair. He (or she) wears a wide-sleeved tunic that extends to mid-thigh, with two parallel bands of color down the front. No shoes are worn. The left hand is held to the face, with the right arm drawn across the chest and supporting the left elbow. The right leg is extended, and the left bent at an angle.

Three men approach the seated figure from the right. The man in the center of this group is wearing what appears to be an animal skin, attached at the left shoulder with a brooch. The two men who flank him are nude. None wears shoes. All three have short hair and are clean-shaven. The man to the far right holds a club of some sort. In terms of gesture, the first man reaches out with both hands and seems to stride toward the seated figure. The two men behind him raise their right arms with their hands extended in the same direction.

Judging from the similar attributes and appearance, these same figures appear in the damaged upper register, though their positions are slightly different.⁶ On the right, we see the same naked man, leaning on his crook, but now with his right arm bent and his hand held at chest level. He raises his right foot, as if he is stepping forward. Next to this figure is the man wearing the animal skin. He holds his left arm at his side; the right arm is not discernable. The third man is not visible and may be sitting or standing on the other side of the pile of rocks. Damage to the mural in this area makes it difficult to discern the details. The lower half of another person is also visible to the far left. Since the bottom portion of a tunic is visible, this may be the person sitting on the rocks in the lower register. Franz Cumont also tentatively identified a pedestal or altar to the far left of the scene, but its presence is not easily verified.⁷

Previous Interpretations of the Mythological Scene

As stated in the introduction, the significance of these scenes is not immediately obvious. Cumont, who published a detailed description of the

⁵ Rostovtzeff (1938a) 74.

⁶ Cumont (1926) 86.

⁷ *Ibid.* 87.

mural, proposed that the scenes represent episodes from an unfamiliar mythological story, possibly one in which three shepherds joyfully discover a young man who is apparently lost and overwhelmed by sadness.⁸ Breasted also described the seated figure as sad, and he speculated that the attribute of the third man was a crutch and that he was a cripple.⁹ Cumont argued instead that the third man was a shepherd holding his crook. In fact, Cumont identified all three standing men as shepherds, asserting that neither the garment of the middle figure nor the nudity of the other two would be out of the ordinary for shepherds in the Syrian desert.¹⁰

It was this conviction that the standing men were shepherds that led Cumont to reject Rostovtzeff's suggestion that the men might be candidates in a mystery cult, approaching the seated deity for initiation.¹¹ Instead, Cumont drew attention to the similarities between this scene and Christian representations of the biblical episode when the angel of the Lord announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds.¹² Cumont then took this idea of shepherds reacting with joy to an announcement to suggest an alternate interpretation: namely that the scene represented the birth of the god Mithras (whom he saw as Dusares in the East). Cult reliefs depicting the birth of Mithras from a rock show that shepherds were present for this event. This interpretation would account for the natural setting, the rocks, and the reaction of the men. But Cumont was unhappy with the lack of a nimbus for the seated god. Also, he was unable to account for the apparent sadness which was expressed in the gesture of this same figure.¹³

A final suggestion for the significance of the scene does not involve a particular deity. In this interpretation, the person (purportedly) seated on the rocks in the upper register is an invalid. In the lower register, one of the three approaching men has taken the place of the invalid, giving him his good health and taking on his infirmity. The cured man is therefore expressing his joy and gratitude to his liberator in this lower scene, with the two men in the rear making the same joyful gesture with just one hand.¹⁴

While all three of these interpretations – shepherds reacting to joyful news, possibly the birth of Christ; shepherds witnessing the birth of Mithras; and the invalid who has been cured – are interesting, none is entirely

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Breasted (1924) 102.

¹⁰ Cumont (1926) 86.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 87.

¹² *Ibid.* 88; Millett, who worked with Cumont on the connections to Christian iconography, suggested that all four were shepherds, and the seated figure was expressing his astonishment at joyful news. See Millett (1926) 150.

¹³ Cumont (1926) 89.

¹⁴ Provided in personal correspondence to Cumont from Fr. de Jerphanion, see Cumont (1926) 484.

satisfactory. The first two do not account for the purported sadness of the seated figure, and the third does not fit the pattern of temple decoration at Dura-Europos. Given the usual iconography of Durene temples, one would expect the painting to have some connection with a deity, a mythological scene, or ritual activities in the temple.¹⁵ It is therefore preferable to find an explanation that would take this typical manner of decorating temples in Dura-Europos into account.

A New Interpretation of the Mythological Scene

As explained above, in his suggestions for the subject matter of the mythological scene, Cumont was unable to account for the sadness of the seated figure. This assumption about the emotional state of the seated figure relies on the hand gestures. While such a gesture certainly could communicate sadness, it is also an arm position that is associated almost exclusively with representations of women. In other words, it could identify the figure as female. A similar gesture, known as the “Pudicitia” gesture, is seen in the funerary sculpture from Rome, where it had connotations of the modesty and virtue of a respectable Roman matron.¹⁶ The most striking regional evidence for a correlation between this particular gesture and gender comes from the neighboring city of Palmyra. A popular style of funerary sculpture in Palmyra during the first three centuries AD was the bust-length relief portrait. In a sample of 220 bust-length portraits that depict females, 158 examples (over 70 percent) show the woman with either the right or left arm raised. The gesture is clearly associated with women.¹⁷ Although not as copious as the examples from Palmyra, terracotta plaques from Dura-Europos itself depict women holding their arms in a similar manner: in two examples, the women hold their right hands facing outward and they raise their left hands, possibly holding the edge of the cloak.¹⁸ A bust of a woman on a terracotta medallion, with her left hand brought to

¹⁵ Rostovtzeff (1938a) 76: “The above evidence shows that there existed at Dura as early as the first century AD a traditional manner of decorating temples. Cult figures, scenes of sacrifice, and occasional mythological pictures illustrating some episode in the story of the god were the constituent parts of this traditional scheme.”

¹⁶ Kleiner (1977) 162.

¹⁷ Two exceptions to this association of the gesture with women: The first is in Beirut: Lagrange (1902) 94. The second is on a relief portrait in the Sackler Museum of Art at Harvard University (1998.3). The child who stands behind the shoulder of the father in the portrait appears to be male, and yet he holds a bunch of grapes to his chest with his raised left arm. It is an unusual gesture for children as well.

¹⁸ Downey (2003) 50–1, figs 1–2.

chin level, provides additional evidence for the association of this gesture with women at Dura-Europos.¹⁹

Two potential objections to the identification of the seated figure as a woman are her short hairstyle and the decorative bands on her tunic, which look like *clavi*. However, similar hairstyles and costume adornment also appear in neighboring Palmyra. Several of the younger girls, depicted in smaller scale above the shoulder of the parent in the bust-length reliefs from Palmyra, have a similar short hairdo.²⁰ In addition, a number of women depicted in the Palmyrene funerary sculpture wear tunics adorned with two vertical embroidered bands.²¹

Turning our attention to the three standing figures, the gestures of the two men standing behind the first man, with their right hands raised and extended, resemble the adulation gesture seen on the adjacent Terentius painting. But the gesture of the first man, with both arms extended toward the seated figure, is not the usual gesture of adoration (although two raised hands are sometimes used, they are not depicted in such a manner, with the hands held horizontally). Cumont described this first man as striding toward the seated figure, as if to embrace him.²² Thus, the gesture could also signify a very enthusiastic welcome. The gestures of the two men in the rear may be helpful in determining the significance of the scene. Comparative evidence from the synagogue in Dura-Europos suggests that their gestures may have a welcoming connotation.

The use of this gesture to indicate a greeting appears on the west wall of the synagogue, in the scene depicting the arrival of Mordecai to the citadel of Susa [PLATE X]. In this scene, Ahasuerus, the Persian king, is rewarding Mordecai for his loyalty. Mordecai is wearing the royal garments and rides through the city on the king's royal horse.²³ A group of men stands to the right of Mordecai, facing him as he approaches; they all raise their right hands. Warren Moon has drawn attention to the similarity between this scene and that of a traditional Roman imperial *adventus*, or triumphant entry into the city.²⁴ There is no mention of a welcoming crowd in the biblical version of the story, so the interpretation of their gesture is not

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 59–60, fig. 14.

²⁰ E.g. Sadurska and Bounni (1994) fig. 159: depiction of daughter above left shoulder of parent; she has short hair and also wears a short-sleeved tunic with two bands running down the front. Cf. Pierson (1984).

²¹ E.g. Sadurska and Bounni (1994) fig. 154 and fig. 202; e.g. Louvre AO 14925; cf. Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor (1993) 72.

²² Cumont (1926) 85.

²³ Esther 6:11.

²⁴ Moon (1992) 594; cf. Brilliant (1963) 174–5, figs 4.23–4.34.

completely straightforward. However, it seems clear that they are not worshipping Mordecai, but rather acclaiming or welcoming him.²⁵

The gesture of Esther, who sits on the throne next to Ahasuerus, to the right of the previous scene, is quite striking. She has her right arm drawn across her body and her left hand raised to her face, in a manner similar to the enigmatic figure in the mythological scene in the temple of Bel. This depiction of Esther provides additional, local evidence for the association of this gesture with women.

If the seated figure is a woman, and if the approaching men are greeting her, the scene may be an illustration of Dionysus discovering Ariadne on the island of Naxos. This interpretation would explain why a woman would be sitting alone in such a setting, seemingly waiting for someone or something. In addition, of the three men approaching her, the central one could represent Dionysus. Although he lacks some of his usual attributes, he is wearing a panther skin. A mosaic from Sarrin provides comparative evidence for Dionysus wearing such a costume.²⁶ There are also several examples that postdate the painting in Dura-Europos. In an Egyptian tapestry from the fourth century, showing the triumph of Dionysus, Dionysus is clearly wearing the panther skin (though in this case, other items of clothing as well).²⁷ In another depiction of the “Triumph of Dionysus,” this time on a pyxis from the sixth century, he is again wearing the panther skin.²⁸ Finally, the nudity of the other two men supports the identification of the central figure as Dionysus, because the cortege of Dionysus is often represented in such a state.²⁹

Dionysus is a popular mythological figure in the Roman East, and scenes from his life appear regularly in mosaics.³⁰ The same mythological episode, the discovery of Ariadne by Dionysus, is illustrated in a floor mosaic now in the Miho Museum in Kyoto, Japan [PLATE XX]. In this mosaic, Ariadne reclines, facing away from the three men who approach her. She looks off into the distance, with her left hand brought to her face. To her right are three men, identified in the inscriptions as Maron, Dionysus, and a satyr. Note that Maron holds a shepherd’s crook. Although not entirely nude,

²⁵ Cf. Goodenough (1964) 183, who thought that the men represented heavenly beings or angels, “marked as such by their size and dress and by their being unrealistic and stiff . . .” As for their gesture – Goodenough interpreted their uplifted hands as indicating divine blessing rather than adulation. In response to this, see Weitzman (1990) 115.

²⁶ Balty (1990); ead. (1991); also, Bowersock (2006) fig. 2.12.

²⁷ Metropolitan Museum (90.5.873).

²⁸ Metropolitan Museum (17.190.56).

²⁹ Bowersock (2006) 46.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 39; see also *id.* (1990) 41–53.

Maron is certainly not wearing a lot of clothes.³¹ The surviving upper half of the satyr suggests that he is also nude. Another mosaic depicting the same mythological episode survives at Chania, Crete (dated to the third century AD). This scene likewise features three men (Dionysus, an old man, presumably Maron, and a satyr) with the reclining Ariadne. The imagery in these mosaics is not identical to that in the temple of Bel at Dura-Europos, but there are striking similarities: a woman alone in a natural setting, approached by three men (in various states of undress), one of whom carries a crook. The same number of participants appears in the various renditions of the scene, and Dionysus always stands in the middle.

The drinking contest between Dionysus and Heracles was also popular in the Roman Near East.³² The episode is featured in a mosaic found in “the House of the Drinking Contest” in Antioch.³³ Two more examples of the same scene are seen in Shahba-Philippopolis, and in a villa in Sephoris.³⁴ At Palmyra, Dionysus is depicted on a fresco from a hypogeum, unfortunately no longer accessible, in the southwest necropolis: it shows the god holding a cup, while reclining below grapes.³⁵ These images show not only that various episodes from the life of Dionysus were common knowledge in the region, but also that he was part of the artistic repertoire in the Near East.³⁶ Therefore, it is surprising not only that Dionysus does not figure more prominently in Dura-Europos, but also that this scene would represent the only illustration of Greek mythology in the wall paintings in the city.³⁷

Some aspects of the painting, however, do not fit easily with an interpretation of it as showing Dionysus’ discovery of Ariadne. For example, Cumont doubted that the seated figure was divine because of the lack of a nimbus; the same would make identification of the figure in the panther skin as Dionysus problematic. One would also expect Dionysus to be rendered in a larger scale. However, an explanation for these oversights may rest with the source of the image. Bowersock has recently argued that the inspiration for mythological scenes in the late antique mosaics in the Near East came not from books, but rather from mime: “It is worth asking now whether we may be seeing in the mythological mosaics generally some

³¹ Miho Museum, Kyoto, Japan (SF03.021).

³² Worcester Art Museum 1933.36: floor mosaic of the “Drinking Contest of Herakles and Dionysus,” Antioch, Atrium House, early second century AD.

³³ Princeton Art Museum y1965–216; cf. Dunbabin (1999) fig. 167.

³⁴ Meyers et al. (1987); Bowersock (2006) 39, fig. 2.5.

³⁵ Ingholt (1932) pl. IV.

³⁶ Dunbabin (2008) 203.

³⁷ Perkins (1973) 34.

kind of reflection of the immensely popular mime theater of late antiquity. Entertainment of this kind frequently exploited myth and represented gods or legendary figures.”³⁸ Dionysus is not nimbate in the mosaics from Sepphoris or Antioch, and may not have been nimbate in the theatrical representations. In addition, in another painting from the temple of Bel, this one on the north wall of the pronaos, Cumont identified a male figure as Heracles because of his attribute, the club.³⁹ There is no mention of the fact that he lacks a nimbus and is the same size as the unidentified figure to his right.

A contemporary inscription in the Dolicheneum provides additional evidence for interest in Dionysus in Dura-Europos. This inscription records a series of liturgical invocations to Dionysus.⁴⁰ Thus, we clearly have a group who worshiped this deity in the city in the early third century AD. The connection between the identity of this group and the author of the mythological scene is less straightforward, since only soldiers used the Dolicheneum.⁴¹ The same was not true at the temple of Bel, where inscriptions and graffiti provide evidence of a mixed population of worshippers,⁴² but the fact that it is directly adjacent to the fresco of the sacrifice of the military tribune would of course make a military context also for the “enigmatic scene” possible. This ambiguity with regard to the individual(s) who commissioned the painting in the temple of Bel is regrettable. The commissioning of mural decoration in the temples clearly had ramifications for the social identity of the patron, and one of local origin would be significant for our understanding of cultural and religious identity in the city.⁴³

The above evidence suggests that the illustration of a mythological episode from the life of Dionysus would not be entirely unusual at Dura-Europos. However, such a scene is surprising in the temple of Bel. Although mythological scenes adorn the walls of the synagogue and the Christian house church, the walls of the temple of Bel are decorated primarily with

³⁸ Bowersock (2006) 54. Also inexplicable is the resemblance of Maron’s “crook” to a club. It brings to mind the club of Heracles, and one wonders if it represents a blending of two popular stories associated with Dionysus: the drinking contest with Heracles and the discovery of Ariadne.

³⁹ Cumont (1926) 118.

⁴⁰ Porter (1948).

⁴¹ Perkins (1973) 27.

⁴² Downey (1988a) 108.

⁴³ Elsner (2007b) 266: “The consistent insistence on inscription in all the images points to a strong assertion of personal and religious identity on the part of the dedicators (and even, in one case, the artist).” Though see the argument by Wharton (1995) 37: “In many of the ancient cults of the Near East only deities and priests were admitted to the inner sanctuary. In consequence, it seems unlikely that the fresco in the naos of the Temple of Bel was intended as a public statement. More probably its action was votive.”

images of deities and scenes of ritual activity.⁴⁴ In the painting depicting Konon and his family on the south wall of the naos, the priests offer incense, while the family members show their reverence by raising their right hands. On the south wall of the pronaos, Lysias, Apollodorus, and Zenodotus, who are depicted between spiral columns, again represent the act of sacrifice by holding their right hands over the incense burners. Julius Terentius, the tribune of the 20th Palmyrene cohort, supplies a third example of the sacrificial act on the north wall of the pronaos. The men standing behind him, presumably from his cohort, raise their right hands toward the three deities (or deified emperors) in the corner and to the Tyches of Dura-Europos and Palmyra.⁴⁵

In addition to the subject matter, the potential difference in the intended function of the mythological scene is even more jarring. As Rostovtzeff remarked when discussing the scenes from the synagogue: "If they impress one as essentially different from the paintings of pagan Dura, this is due not to a difference in style, but ... to the fact that their purpose was different."⁴⁶ This difference between the two types of wall decoration is best illustrated by focusing on the gestures. There are two primary gestures in the sacrificial scenes from the temple of Bel: the first involves holding the right hand above an incense burner, placing incense into the flame as an offering to the deity; and the second is the right hand raised or cupped in front of the body to show adulation toward the deity or deities. In 1924, Breasted commented on the difference between the adulation gesture seen in the Terentius painting, with the arm fully extended, and that seen in the painting of Konon and his family adorning the south wall of the naos. Contrary to the soldiers, the members of Konon's family hold their right hands, palm outward, in front of the chest. Breasted argued that it was essentially the same gesture in both paintings; the difference was in the location of the deity: "Why should the arms of the worshipers in the scene of the tribune be extended in worship toward the left, and in the great painting directly toward the observer? Because in both cases the direction depicted is that of the images of the gods: in the first case on the wall, in the second in the shrine in the same room."⁴⁷ In other words, the gestures did more than represent the action; they performed it. As Wharton says, "the frescoes of the naos are not *ornamental*, as in the triclinium of a Roman house, but *active*."⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Elsner (2007b) 260: "one is struck by how many images represent the act of sacrifice."

⁴⁵ Cf. e.g. Kaizer (2006).

⁴⁶ Rostovtzeff (1938a) 121.

⁴⁷ Breasted (1924) 100.

⁴⁸ Wharton (1995) 61 (emphasis is hers).

In contrast to the votive function of the gestures in the ritual scenes, the gestures in the enigmatic mythological scene merely aid in the decipherment of the narrative. There is little to suggest that the action in the scene had any relation to activities in the pronaos itself. In this way, the mythological scene has much more in common with the type of decoration seen in the synagogue or the Christian church, where the artists who painted the scenes in the synagogue used static scenes to narrate their stories.⁴⁹ The paintings also date from roughly the same period: the first half of the third century. It is possible therefore that the mythological scene provides evidence of shared workshops, or at least shared ideas, in the adornment of religious edifices in Dura-Europos in the third century AD.⁵⁰

A reference to Dionysus in a temple already dedicated to other gods would not be revolutionary in Dura-Europos; it was commonplace to worship a number of deities in the same temple.⁵¹ Nor would it be unusual to have a painting added at this late date in the life of the temple. We know that the temples were decorated in a piecemeal fashion.⁵² As mentioned above, although the mythological scene is unusual, the decorative choice provides an interesting connection between the temple and the synagogue or the Christian church during this period at Dura-Europos. However, if Bowersock is correct, and the inspiration for these scenes came from mime, its presence also shows the involvement of Dura-Europos in the cultural activities of the region. Even more than regional associations, the painting of Dionysus shows a connection in the pagan cult of Dura-Europos to the city of Rome at a time when others have argued that its peripheral nature was far more important.⁵³

⁴⁹ Rostovtzeff (1938a) 121.

⁵⁰ Wharton (1995) 60–1; see also Jensen (1999) 186, where he discusses Wharton's ideas and concurs: "Thus Jews, Christians, and polytheists shared a particular artistic style and iconographic approach, albeit for three very different kinds of buildings serving three very different religious communities."

⁵¹ A point made most recently by Kaizer (2009b) 158–9.

⁵² Rostovtzeff (1938a) 76.

⁵³ If the scene is of Dionysus and Ariadne, this would this go against Elsner (2007b) 266, who argued that images all imply "a certain element of religious affiliation to broadly local gods, as opposed to, say, the imperial cult or deities directly sponsored by the Roman establishment elsewhere in the empire. In this sense they establish and affirm peripherality, or the centrality of local cult and identity, in a way that ignores the Roman empire and the distant imperial center."

At Dura-Europos the presence of women is very obvious in some sanctuaries, namely those of Artemis, Atargatis and Azzanathkona.¹ The rich documentation from those temples is an invitation to focus on the first two centuries AD, before the coming of Rome. During this period, from the three sanctuaries with *salles à gradins*, many names of women who belonged to prominent Durene families are known. Their genealogies have often been studied, despite uncertainties due to the frequency with which the same names appear over different generations.² Here we will try to obtain a global picture, from the point of view of religious topography, explaining the curious phenomenon of the *salles à gradins* and their inscriptions.

Priestesses in the Roman Near East

The position of women in the religious life of the Roman Near East is marked by an opposition between the coast and the mainland, where we have no evidence for priestesses, even in those places where the epigraphy is relatively rich (i.e. Emesa, Gerasa, Apamea or the Hauran).³ The same holds true for Palmyra. We have here the combination of two phenomena: first the possible absence, or at least the rarity, of female priests in most of the regional religious traditions; second the rarity of references to official functions, religious or not, in the epigraphy of the Near East.⁴ The situation is slightly different on the coast for cults that are clearly more Greek or

¹ I would like to thank Ted Kaizer for inviting me to the colloquium, and then for improving my English text.

² See Johnson (1932) and Arnaud (1986) and id. (1997) for the more important studies.

³ See for a study of priestesses in the Roman Near East, Yon (2009). Like the latter, the present paper is part of a more general study on cultic personal in the sanctuaries of the Near East. See also Yon (2007–9).

⁴ Yon (2009) 198–202: see Sadurska and Bounni (1994) 27–8, no. 22, and Teixidor (1966) 178–9, no. 7 (respectively PAT 2645 and 1631). Tanabe (1986) pl. 234, for a good picture of the first relief.

Roman.⁵ I leave aside such religious functions as the famous prophetess in Niha, for which we do not have more than a few examples.⁶

But absence in the documentation does not necessarily mean a total non-existence, and the case of Hatra may serve as a reminder of this: from the more than four hundred inscriptions known from the site, only one priestess is known.⁷ Is this unique case a reflection of the rarity of feminine sacerdotal functions, or the consequence of a local epigraphic habit, which does not often give the names of functions, even when there is one?

For the Near East as a whole, it is striking that for female deities such as Atargatis or Astarte, despite Lucian and the available epigraphy, we do not have any evidence for priestesses, neither in Hierapolis, nor in Afqa or Byblos. Only when looking at 'Oriental' cults outside of Syria, some ambiguous clues can be found. At Delos, in the sanctuary of the Syrian goddess, a woman who could have been Syrian by origin was ἱέρεια and wife of a priest.⁸ Other examples in the Greek world show that this Onesakō was not the only one, and that other women, independently of their husbands, were also depicted as ἱέρεια of the Syrian goddess. Athens, Egypt and the West are represented.⁹ The evidence seems to show that the cult of the Dea Syria had, outside Syria, rules and rituals which may have been closer to what is usually known in the Greek world.

This transformation of the cult of the Dea Syria overseas must be underlined, whether it was to adapt it to its new settings, or perhaps because the documentation pertaining to these areas is richer and more inclined to make mention of religious functions. We have an interesting parallel some centuries before: at Sidon, on the famous sarcophagus of Eschmunazor, the queen was called priestess, the only case in Phoenician epigraphy, whereas in Punic epigraphy at Carthage examples are numerous, recalling the difference between Syria and the rest of the Greek world for the cult of the Dea Syria.¹⁰

⁵ To give a few examples: Berytus: Waddington (1870) no. 1843 = *CIL* III, 154 (early third century), *Sentia Magnia Sae/phare flam[ini]ca*; *AE* 1939, 68, *Statie Q(uinti) f(iliae) Rufillae, L(uci) Afideni Valentis, sacerdoti divae Aug(ustae)*. Laodicea: *IGLS* IV, 1263 (AD 115/16), Σωσιπάτρων Θεογένους τοῦ Στράτωνος (...) τ<ή>ν ἐπικαλουμένην Κλεοπάτρων, ἱερασσμένην τ<ή>ς κυρίας Ἀρτέμιδος τῷ γῆρ' ἔτει. Other cases are known in Seleucia (*IGLS* III, 1187) or Tyre (*I. Nécropole* 1).

⁶ *IGLS* VI, 2929.

⁷ Hatra inscription H34, *šlmt' dy mrbtw kmrt [']š[r]bl*. For the Hatra inscriptions, see Aggoula (1991) and Beyer (1998).

⁸ Siebert (1968) 361: Ὁ ἱερεὺς Νίκων Ἀπολλωνίου καὶ ἡ ἱέρεια ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ Ὀνησακῶ Ζένωνος.

⁹ For the references, see Yon (2009) 206.

¹⁰ For Sidon, *KAI* 14 = Gibson (1982) no. 28 (Eshmunazor): 'my 'mštrt khnt štrt rbty hmlkt bt mlk šmn'zr mlk šdnm. For Carthage, *KAI* 70, 93, 145; *CIS I*, 5941–2, 5947, 5949–50, 5961, 5987–8.

Women and the Great Goddesses of Dura

Returning to Dura, it can be noticed that women were usually very rare in most of the sanctuaries. A few examples will be sufficient. On the famous fresco of Konon, it is clear that Bithnanaia was there because she belonged to a family: her name (and her portrait) follows the name of her father and is followed by other members of the family (presumably brothers).¹¹ Baribonnaia, known by a dipinto and a graffito in the temple of Zeus Theos, is another case where a woman was present because of the familial context.¹² Like Bithnanaia, she was depicted among the rest of her family, and she was not the principal focus of attention.

Another example is a list with some feminine names. The right-hand column of this list has been interpreted as a list of servants of the members of a *thiasos*, who were themselves listed on the left. It is the only possible case of women belonging to a *thiasos*.¹³

In other sanctuaries, we do not have many more attestations. Most revealing is the list of the priests known from the Durene evidence. Even in the three sanctuaries on which we will focus, the clergy was male,¹⁴ and even if we know the names of women who took part in ceremonies, the evidence is restricted to a rather short time span and to a rather small portion of the religious space.

Artemis

The sanctuary of Artemis has a complex history which began even earlier than what is represented on the published plan. The first documented stage (ca. 40 BC) is the transformation of an undefined *naiskos* into a temple, with a square courtyard surrounding a free-standing building. The latter had the usual layout of Durene temples, a pronaos and a naos flanked by two sacristies, with the inclusion in the pronaos of six banks of steps, converting it into a *salle à gradins* [PLATE XXI]. The steps were later torn out

¹¹ Temple 'of the Palmyrene gods', Cumont (1926) 359–60, no. 5: she stood between Κόνων Νικοστράτου (her father) and Διογένης, Λυσίας, Πάτροκλος, all sons of the same Κόνων.

¹² Rep. VII/VIII, 216, no. 892.

¹³ Cumont (1926) 399–400, no. 44 (with Milik (1972) 126–7). Left: Μαμη / Κομοδία / Μαρκέλλα / 'Ρόννη / Αβισσεος / Μαινι / Σαριγας / Ρουβαθ / Μαρρινβας / Μαραυα / Βάσσος / Ρουβαθ; right: Σωταη / 'Αριος / Βαρ[λ]ας / Δουσά[ς?] / Ναβουμαρι / 'Ηλιόδωρος / Δομετία / Βαρβεουσα. The last two names inscribed are those of two singers and musicians ('chanteuses et musiciennes'), according to Milik.

¹⁴ See Yon (2005) 180. In the sanctuary of Artemis, Ἄβεις Μαχχίνιος belonged to 'the priests' (τῶν ἱερέων: Rep. III, 55, D152 = SEG VII, 353), and a Αὐρήλιος Γόρας is γαζζοφ(ύλας) (Cumont (1926) 404, no. 50).

and reused as paving material for the courtyard.¹⁵ Many subsidiary rooms (*naoi* or *oikoi*) were built in the courtyard, some with benches around the walls, obviously banqueting halls.¹⁶

These steps were dated between 7 BC and AD 140 and nearly all of them carry feminine names with usual and regular formulae, despite misspellings. Prominent features are names in the genitive and genealogies.¹⁷ The sanctuary was enlarged towards the south at the end of the Parthian period (or maybe later), with the addition of a small odeon. From then onwards, all the names were male and mostly Semitic.¹⁸ It is difficult to know whether this change was due to a change in ritual or only to a change in fashion.

The evidence about the gods is very elusive. The role of Artemis is obvious, but the *sunnaoi theoi* and the assimilation of the chief deity with Nanaia rests only on one single graffito.¹⁹ Even if this assimilation was well known, as in Palmyra, one must be aware of the difference between an official name (as given by the clergy), which may be reflected by a dedication on stone, and a name written on an undated graffito. That is not to say that Artemis was not Nanaia for some part of the population, but simply that we do not know this for certain. Incidentally, this same graffito is another example of a woman involved in cults.

Azzanathkona

Curiously, there was another Artemis at Dura, with a second name of unclear etymology, Azzanathkona (Ἀρτέμιδι θεῖ(ᾧ) καλουμένη Ἀζζαναθκονα).²⁰ The evidence is slightly later than that for Artemis. Two sanctuary units stood in a square precinct. In one of them, the front room was arranged as a *salle à gradins*. There, the cult relief was set into the rear wall, with two altars in front of it, defining the room as the real centre of worship.²¹

¹⁵ On the history of the sanctuary, see *Rep.* VI, 397–411, and Downey (1988a) 76–9 and 89–92. Generally on the *salles à gradins*, *ibid.* 126–7.

¹⁶ But see the contribution by J. Buchmann to this volume.

¹⁷ For example, Cumont (1926) 412–13, no. 57 (*SEG* VII, 681): Ἰμαβοῦσας Σαλάμνου τῆς Βηλοοβασσάρου γυναικὸς καὶ Μηκατναΐας Παπίου τῆς Ζεβιδαδάδου γυναικὸς.

¹⁸ For the odeon, Cumont (1926) 186–91, and Leriche (1997). For the names, e.g. Cumont (1926) 446–7, no. 127 (*SEG* VII, 712): Ἀχεΐας, Σαλμάνης, Ἄμρας, Γιτ[...], ἄβας, Μ[α]σθαναδχιαθ Ἀχάβους, Εἰσάρσας Ἀδδᾶ, Βαρναῖος, Ἀβεδσάβης Βαρνάβου, Μαρᾶνο[s].

¹⁹ Cumont (1926) 411–12, no. 55 (*SEG* VII, 336): Μαθθανᾶθ Ναναΐα. For Palmyra, *IGLS* XVII/1, 177 = Bounni (2004) 61–2, no. 17 (*AE* 2004, 1561, and *SEG* LIV, 1609 for the Greek version). For the cult of Artemis, and its relations with Nanaia, Downey (1977) 170–1.

²⁰ *Rep.* V, 142, no. 453 (AD 161).

²¹ *Rep.* V, 131–200, and 170–7 for the *salle à gradins*; Downey (1988a) 99–101; Arnaud (1997) with 121, fig. 6, for a general plan. For the cult, see Downey (1977) 185–7, and Arnaud (1997) 129–31.

Again, all the steps, dated between AD 12 and 107, are dedicated to women with the same formulae.²² The identity of Azzanathkona is unclear, whether her name came originally from the city of Anath, downstream from Dura, or if she was the ‘intendante de la créatrice’, which seems rather convincing.²³ If we follow the first interpretation, Azzanathkona, as a tutelary deity of Anath, was identified with the tutelary deity of Dura, Artemis. In any case, in the inscription her first name was Artemis, whereas the iconographic parallel which comes to mind immediately is Atargatis (she is seated on a throne between lions, wearing *chiton* and *polos*). But the *salle à gradins*, even if in a prominent position, was not isolated: it coexisted with various rooms and chapels which were largely or partly reserved for different elements of the population and numerous graffiti bear witness to that situation.²⁴

Atargatis

The sanctuary of Atargatis was situated next to that of Artemis, but is later. The plan closely resembles that of its neighbour, with a sanctuary unit against the rear wall, the pronaos arranged as a *salle à gradins* and subsidiary rooms against the walls of the court. Some of them served as chapels for the *sunnaioi theoi* or as banqueting halls. On the steps of the pronaos were inscribed texts analogous to those of Artemis, all dedicated in the same year (AD 61).²⁵ Some thirty years earlier, an Ἀμμώνιος Ἀπολλοφάνου dedicated something (perhaps the naos itself) ‘for the salvation of himself, of Lysanias (his brother?), and *adelphoi* (“brothers”)’. It has been suggested by Cumont that the *adelphoi* could have been *adelphai*, making it a feminine *thiasos*.²⁶ No further evidence ever supplemented this hypothesis.

²² E.g. *Rep.* V, 185, no. 520: Ἀσία Σελεύκου τοῦ Λυσίου Ἀδαῖος δὲ τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ Ἀδαίου γυναικός.

²³ See Milik (1967) 558. *Status questionis* in Downey (1977) 185.

²⁴ Downey (1988) 100–1. See e.g. *Rep.* V, 142, no. 453, and 151, no. 468: dedications of an *oikos* and of a room. For the graffiti, as in rooms D 6 or W 7, see respectively *ibid.* 139–41, nos 449–51, and 146–9, nos 454–62 (list of names).

²⁵ Cumont (1926) 183–5 did not recognise the existence of the sanctuary of Atargatis and took it for a part of that of Artemis. This mistake was corrected only in 1929–30 by the Yale University mission: see *Rep.* III, 4 and 18. See Downey (1988a) 102–5 and 124–9, and Leriche (1997) 894–6, for the architectural history, and Downey (1977) 172–80 for the cult. More recently, Lightfoot (2003) 50–6 on Atargatis at Dura. For an example of an inscription, Cumont (1926) 429, no. 88, with J. Johnson in *Rep.* II, 169: Σωσιπάτρης Ἀπολλωνίου, Λυσίου δὲ τοῦ Σελεύκου γυνή.

²⁶ Cumont (1926) 201 and 427, commentary to no. 85 (Ἀμμώνιος Ἀπολλοφάνου τοῦ Σελεύκου [ἀ]νήγειρεν ὑπὲρ τε ἑαυτοῦ καὶ Λυσανίου καὶ ἀδελφῶν σωτηρίας).

Paredroi

In sanctuaries so full of feminine presence, the position of the goddesses' male partners, their *paredroi*, is interesting. Hadad is attested on the famous relief found in the court of the temple of Atargatis, but his name is attested only in that of Artemis, on a graffito.²⁷ Other male gods do appear, such as Adonis and Saddoudas or Sasados, but not for the period of development of the *salle à gradins*.²⁸ As regards Azzanathkona, the bull on the relief has sometimes been identified with the same Hadad,²⁹ and no other male divinity seems to qualify for the position of *paredros* in this temple. Concerning Artemis, the cult of Apollo and Artemis *archegoi* ('founders') was still active at the beginning of the Christian era, showing that the Seleucid past of the city had not been forgotten.³⁰ Other evidence is lacking.

Salles à Gradins and Sanctuaries

Delos and the 'Syrian Cults'

We have thus three different deities, with very similar aspects for some parts of their personalities. One of those is the use of *salles à gradins*, a type of monument with a complex genealogy, of which the oldest example is found at Delos. Nothing proves that the ceremonies at Delos or in the other known temple-theatres were the same as those in Dura, but it is reasonable to think of ceremonies of a similar kind, with dances and sacred chants, and with a statue being brought back and forth from the naos into the *salle à gradins*.³¹ It is obvious that the *salles à gradins* also served for rituals banquets, but what is particular to those of the three goddesses in Dura

²⁷ For the relief, Downey (1977) 9–11, no. 3. It has been published several times and served as a cover picture more than once. For the inscription, see Cumont (1926) 411, no. 55 (SEG VII, 336), cited above in n. 19: Ἀδᾶδ[ω] Γαββούτης.

²⁸ Rep. III, 46, no. 146 (SEG VII, 380), from AD 225 or 235: ζωγρά[φημα Σαδδ]οῦδαν(?) [καὶ] Ἀδών[ιδος καὶ] Ἀτραγάτη[ς] (for the restoration of the name Adonis, see Lightfoot (2003) 53 with n.126); Rep. III, 59, no. 158 (SEG VII, 342), undated: θεοῦ Σασάδου; Rep. III, 62, no. 160 (SEG VII, 343), from AD 235: θεῶ Σαδδουῶδαν. All those inscriptions are of a much later date, and belong to the second part of the Roman period.

²⁹ Hypothesis rejected, among others, by Downey (1977) 186–7.

³⁰ Rep. III, 63, no. 161 (SEG VII, 352): Ἀρτέμιδι καὶ Ἀπόλλωνι ἀρχηγοῖς. See Welles et al. (1959) no. 25, for the civic cult of Apollo (and of Zeus, ancestors [*progonoi*], and Seleucus Nicator) in AD 180.

³¹ See Will (1951) 78–9; Lightfoot (2003). See also Arnaud (1997) 131 for the sanctuary of Azzanathkona: standing on the platform, the priest was giving something that is not otherwise defined to the audience out of a small amphora.

is their specialisation for women and the number of inscriptions found. The co-existence of banqueting rooms and of *salles à gradins* points to a different use, closely tied to the necessities of the cult, because they had generally been built as pronaos of a sanctuary unit (admittedly sometimes as one among several, as in the sanctuary of Azzanathkona). At least since Cumont, the role of theatres in sanctuaries has often been studied.³² Nevertheless, the prevalence of female names has not been explained. Were ceremonies celebrated only for women (in the presence of women), or did they include specific cultic practices to be performed only by them?

As a matter of fact, other *salles à gradins* have been found in Dura too. In the northern end of the sanctuary of Adonis ('pronaos 47'), the arrangement is comparable ('the south end is treated as a stage, the north end as an orchestra surrounded by seats for spectators'³³), even if on a lesser scale (one bench only on each side). The inscriptions give a very different picture. The first, from AD 152, is the dedication of the room to Atargatis by a man (whose name is lost) for the salvation of his wife and children; the second, from AD 178, is inscribed on a seat block with the name of Βαρλαας Βαργατους, γαζοφύλαξ.³⁴

Likewise, in the temple of the Gadde, a small room (8) was arranged as a *salle à gradins*, with only three tiers of benches. Here graffiti list two groups of four men with the offerings they had brought (bread and barley).³⁵ It is obviously a very different type of inscription from the more formal 'dedications' of the steps in the temples of Artemis, Atargatis and Azzanathkona.

The chronology is another point of interest in the comparison with Delos. The monumentalization of the Aegean island took place (ca. 150 BC) more than a century before Dura, where the 'fashion' of 'straight steps' lasted until around 150 AD at the latest. Then, another model was adopted,

³² Cumont (1926) 190–1: 'dans le paganisme syrien l'union étroite du "théâtre" et du temple persistait encore à l'époque impériale ... les salles de spectacle annexées au temple d'Artémis à Doura ne constituent point une exception, mais répondent à une coutume très générale' ('in Syrian paganism the strict union between "theatre" and temple still exists in the imperial period ... the theatre rooms appended to the temple of Artemis at Dura are no exception at all, but conform to a very general custom'); Will (1951) 79: on the 'rôle capital du théâtre [in Delos] dans le culte, souligné à la fois par sa place, ses dimensions, son portique, l'autel et le trône' ('major role of the theatre [in Delos] in the cult, emphasised at the same time by its position, its dimensions, its portico, the altar and the throne'). For a recent overview of cults in theatres, see Moretti (2009).

³³ Rep. VII/VIII, 145 and fig. 42, facing 150.

³⁴ Rep. VII/VIII, 167–8, no. 870, and 170, no. 874, respectively.

³⁵ Rep. VII/VIII, 252 and fig. 67, with inscriptions nos 904–5. For the date (ca. AD 150), see *ibid.* 256. One may also note that Μιττολβαισα Μην(?) of no. 905 could well be the same as Μιττολβαισου Μηνᾶ of *P. Dura* 20 (= Welles et al. (1959) no. 20), from AD 121. Feissel and Gascou (2000) 174 now read in *P. Dura* 20 Μητολβαισαιμην.

with an odeon (in the sanctuary of Artemis), as in Delos, while the steps of the former *salle à gradins* were used for the pavement of a courtyard.³⁶ The peculiar form of ‘straight steps’ (as opposed to the odeon, with its semicircular shape) is comparable to the *theatron* of Si’ in the Hauran, where the Greek word is transcribed in Nabataean Aramaic as *tytr’*.³⁷ It is difficult to know, at Si’ as at Dura, whether this shape is a conscious choice, or only an easier solution for the architect, the mason and the stonecutter. Obviously, the odeon is more Graeco-Roman in appearance and may be the reflection of the arrival of Rome. The *theatron* could be presented also as the adaptation in a ‘Greek shape’ of a local cultic function.³⁸ It is an element of the ‘monumentalisation’ of the sanctuary, as happened on Delos. The changes in plan could also correspond to changes in ritual, but that is not supported by any positive evidence. One may note, though, that in the inscriptions from the odeon, all the names are male and most are Semitic, reflecting at least a change in the attendance of the sanctuary, and perhaps a change in the onomastics of the city and its leading families.³⁹

We do not know what happened in the two other sanctuaries (that of Atargatis and that of Azzanathkona), where no inscriptions pertaining to women are known after the mid-second century. In any case, the changes happening in the sanctuary of Artemis could prove, even before the Roman conquest of Mesopotamia and of the banks of the Middle Euphrates, the permeability of Dura not only towards the East, but also towards the part of Syria that was already in the empire (Hierapolis at least).⁴⁰

Men in the Sanctuaries

The Delian inscriptions show that some women contributed towards the cost of construction, whereas at Dura the wives and daughters appear only as owners of the steps (in the genitive: *γυναικός* or *θυγατρός*), but always

³⁶ Dedication of the *theatron* (τὸ θέατρον), ID 2628 in 108/7 BC. But at Dura, the semicircular shape of the odeon of Artemis is a secondary transformation of a room with straight steps: Leriche (1999).

³⁷ On the monument and the inscription, see most recently Tholbecq (2007). Another example of an odeon is that of Sahr al-Ledja, cf. Kalos (1997) and id. (2003).

³⁸ Dentzer (1989) 314–15, and Frézouls (1989) 404. Cf. Will (1951) 77, who argued that the theatre was a possible architectural solution, but not a compulsory one in a Syrian sanctuary (‘Le théâtre est une solution architecturale possible, mais nullement obligatoire dans un sanctuaire syrien’).

³⁹ See n. 18 (D341–4 and C123–7).

⁴⁰ The general layout of Dura temples is Mesopotamian in origin, but as Lightfoot (2003) 51 rightly adds, ‘the Delian precedent illustrates that it was a layout that the Hierapolitans themselves were already familiar with in the mid-second century BC’.

in connection with husbands or fathers (in the genealogies).⁴¹ Men were in a position of predominance, even in those particular sanctuaries. All the graffiti mention men, as in the list of names from Atargatis,⁴² and even if several women names are inscribed, most of those lists which certainly name members of *thiasoi* are only composed of masculine names.

Moreover, all the dedications (of naoi, rooms or cultic facilities) were made by men.⁴³ Even more striking are some of the inscriptions on the steps, using other formulae, with a verb and the feminine names in the dative.⁴⁴ As we saw, feminine names were usually in the genitive, or in the dative, whereas masculine names are the subject of the action. Some variations of vocabulary are notable as well, with another type of syntax: εἰς + feminine name; in that case, we do not have a seat with the name of a woman, but a real dedication *for* a woman.⁴⁵ Another way of seeing this phrase would be to give it an honorary function, as a way for families to honour their members in public life. Particularly striking is a dedication by a man, Apollophanès, for his wife, Athénophila, and for Roumea, daughter of his *tropheus*, that is 'foster father'.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Among more than one hundred names of subscritors for the theatre, feminine names are not rare: ID 2628, fgt B, col. I, 23–5: Ζωίλα Ἰσιδώρου ... ΜΗΚΩ Διοσκου[ρίδου] β' Ἀσία Ἰσιδώρου. See as well, fgt A, col. I, 19–20: gift by a man ὑπὲρ τῆς γυναικὸς Διοκλείας καὶ τῶν τέκνων, a case more similar to the situation at Dura.

⁴² *Thiasos (hetaireia)* in Atargatis temple in AD 37: Frye et al. (1955) 129–31, no. 2; see Milik (1972) 135. More generally, the best study is that of Milik (1972) 122–40, even if in some details it often needs a cautious reading. Other examples in the sanctuary of Azzanathkona, Rep. V, 146–7, no. 454; in the sanctuary of Artemis, Cumont (1926) 444–7, nos 123, 125 and 127 or Rep. IV, no. 341. In the latter case, the evidence seems to be later, as all the above-mentioned graffiti were found in the odeon.

⁴³ Examples are numerous: Rep. III, 61, no. 159 (Atargatis temple, AD 92/3): ἀνήγειρεν Νικάνωρ Διονυσίου τόνδε τὸν οἶκον καὶ τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ ταμείον πρὸς εὐκοσμίαν τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῆς Ἀταργάτειος θεᾶς ὑπὲρ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γυναικὸς καὶ τέκνων σωτηρίας. Cumont (1926) no. 85 (found in the Artemis temple, in the *salle à gradins*, near the altar, AD 31/2), Ἀμμώνιος Ἀπολλοφάνου τοῦ Σελεύκου [ἀ]νήγειρεν ὑπὲρ τε ἑαυτοῦ καὶ Λυσανίου καὶ ἀδελ<φ>ῶν σωτηρίας. Rep. V, 177–8, no. 504 (rooms 9–10, temple of Azzanathkona [room 9 is a *salle à gradins*], AD 33): ἀνήγειρεν Ρεχιμναῖος Βουμαιοῦ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τεκνῶν σωτηρίας Αἰζανα[θ]κονα. The evidence from other sanctuaries (Adonis, Gadde) points to the same conclusion.

⁴⁴ Rep. V, 183, no. 516 (temple of Azzanathkona, AD 107): ἀνήγειρεν Αἰωσαμσος Οὔταινετος Πατροφίλοι Φιλίππου τῇ γυναικὶ αὐτοῦ.

⁴⁵ Cumont (1926) 419, no. 69 (temple of Artemis, AD 39/40): ἀνήγειρεν Ἀπολλοφάνης Λυσανίου εἰς Ἀθηνόφιλαν Σελεύκου τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς Ῥουμέαν Μαρίωνος τὴν τοῦ τροφῆως αὐτοῦ θυγατέρα. Rep. III, 56, no. 153 (temple of Artemis, AD 76): ἀνέγρην Ἀβουιλμῖς εἰς τὸ (?) Νινναία θυγατρὸς αὐτοῦ. Rep. V, 199, no. 552 (temple of Azzanathkona, AD 35/6, see Arnaud (1997) 127 with n. 7): Δημήτριος Διοδώρου ἀνέθηκεν εἰς Ραιμῖς Βαρναίου ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ.

⁴⁶ See Cumont (1926) 419, no. 69, cited above in n.45. The real implication of this phrase is difficult to fathom: the difference in status is not as striking as one would believe by looking at

As has been shown by K. Dijkstra, dedications ‘for the life (or salvation) of’ family members are typical of Palmyrene epigraphy, and show that family ties were one of the most important aspects of the public representation of social life.⁴⁷ It underlines the importance of family ties and it could well be, alternatively, that those inscriptions reflect cases of men acting as tutors for women who could not do so legally.

Salles à Gradins and the Society of Dura

As the exclusive presence of women on the inscriptions of the steps is difficult to explain, family relationships are an alternative (though not exclusive) way to understand why those names were carved.⁴⁸ The vocabulary of family relationships is indeed very important, as almost every name of a woman on the steps is followed either by the name of her husband or by that of her father. In a few cases, brothers are also husbands,⁴⁹ enhancing the role of families and the importance of endogamy.

Onomastic Designation and Homonymies

The great families of Dura had very often in their onomastics names such as Seleukos, Lysias, Konon or Antiochos.⁵⁰ Despite this, from the beginning Semitic names were very common in the evidence from the three sanctuaries, and such families were among the first holders of seats.⁵¹ Of more interest is the evolution within the onomastics. As was shown by P. Arnaud, at first families with Semitic names were in a lesser position compared to their purely ‘Greek’ counterparts. In the first stage (AD 35–40), Semitic names were a minority among families who had mostly Greek names, and they were carried by women.⁵² They then occupied a marginal

the names. Roumea and her father Mariôn had Semitic names, but belonged through their role to a very ‘Greek’ family, and were honoured on the same level as other members of the family.

⁴⁷ See Dijkstra (1995) 81–170.

⁴⁸ In his contribution to this volume, M. Sommer argues how the papyri from Dura-Europos and the Middle Euphrates instead suggest a rather high level of legal personality on the part of the women involved.

⁴⁹ Cumont (1926) 416–7, nos 64–5 (temple of Artemis, AD 32/3): the formula is ὁμοματρίας ἀδελφῆς καὶ γυναικός (‘sister born of the same mother and wife’).

⁵⁰ See Welles (1951).

⁵¹ Cumont (1926) 412, no. 57 (SEG VII, 681): Ἰμαβούσας Σαλάμνου τῆς Βηλοοβασσάρου γυναικός (temple of Artemis, 7/6 BC); Rep. V, 184, no. 517: Ρεχειμανναια Σινναναιου τῆς Ἀχαβούς Ἀβουιλίου [γυν]αϊκός (temple of Azzanathkona, AD 74). See also Rep. V, 177–8, no. 504, as cited above in n. 43.

⁵² Arnaud (1997) 140. See Rep. V, 199, no. 552, cited above in n. 45.

position until the end of the first century, being eventually greater in number from the beginning of the next century.

In a way, this whole process could be read as an affirmation of identity by some families. Almost four centuries after Alexander the Great, it is an obvious case of onomastic traditions, but it is difficult to speak of families of Macedonian descent. Names were used by some as social markers. It is also evidence of the social position of women, at least in certain families, and not evidence of a real 'ethnic' origin. One may argue without risk that after centuries of intermarriage, at Dura as elsewhere, so-called ethnicity was a matter of self-definition. More and more, the origin of the name was of less importance for defining oneself, and Semitic names were carried even by the elite of the city. An interesting graffito (undated) from the temple of Azzanathkona in the *salle à gradins* is a list of names, most of them purely Greek (as Athenodōros or Kallistratos), but ending with one Αειβηλος Ναβουβαραχης Δουρανός.⁵³ The ethnic shows that the graffito may be of a later period, since it was preferred to Εὐρωπαῖος in the Roman period, something which has often been interpreted as a proof of the continuation of Semitic traditions.

These phenomena of 'onomastic pride' explain why some names were so popular and why also anomalous ways of naming oneself were used: for example, matronymy was probably a way to differentiate between branches of the same families, by referring to a well-known ancestor, and not a designation used for an illegitimate son.⁵⁴ It could be an explanation as well for common formulae like ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος, 'who is called'. As is well known from elsewhere in the Near East, men or women sometimes had double names, as in the epigraphy of Palmyra, where the famous Zenobia was called Bat-Zabbai in Aramaic.⁵⁵ In the case of Zenobia, the designation is different depending on the language, but the two names are frequently coexistent in the same text: the usual way of expressing it is ὁ καὶ or ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος.⁵⁶ The phenomenon has often been interpreted as a case of double loyalty, to the dominant (Greek) culture and to the local (Semitic) one, and it should be understood as such when a Ζηνόβιος is also Εἰαίβας.⁵⁷

⁵³ *Rep.* V, 178, no. 505.

⁵⁴ Cumont (1926) 422, no. 75 (*SEG* VII, 695; *Artemis*, AD 107/8): Μηκανναιας Λυσίου τοῦ Ὀλύμπου, γυναικὸς δὲ Λυσανίου τοῦ Σελεύκου τῆς Μαμαίας.

⁵⁵ For Zenobia, *IGLS* XVII/1, 57 (= *PAT* 0293): Σεπτίμια Ζηνοβία in Greek and *sptmy' btzby* in Aramaic.

⁵⁶ In Palmyra, *IGLS* XVII/1, 57 (= *PAT* 0278): Ἰούλιος Αὐρήλιος Ζηνόβιος ὁ καὶ Ζαβδίλας.

⁵⁷ *Rep.* VII/VIII, 83–4, no. 846 (*AE* 1940, 219): Ζηνόβιος ὁ καὶ Εἰαίβας. See also *Rep.* VII/VIII, 129, no. 868: Αμμαιος ὁ αὐτὸς Ἀλεξάνδρος (on Alexandros, see below in n. 71). Another interesting case is Cumont (1926) 356, no. 2 (*SEG* II, 755) where both father and son have double names: Ἀθηνόδωρος Ἀριστοδήμου ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος Ραγειβηλος Μαχχισαίου.

But at Dura, as elsewhere, the evidence may be less clear-cut, with double names of the same origin used as a way to prevent confusion: one Σέλευκος may also be Διόδοτος,⁵⁸ as at Palmyra a Γαδδαρσος is also called Βαα.⁵⁹

The phenomenon is almost the same for gods. Zeuses or Artemises had the same names because they had similar functions under different aspects, but differentiation could be made by adding another, more specific name.⁶⁰ It did not necessarily imply a choice of devotion. A god was called Zeus and a *stratègos* Lysias. As is obvious, the system may be working two ways. Names could be social markers, but they could also be seen from the other side as a good way of assimilating oneself.

The Family of Lysias

If we look more closely at the families represented in the *salles à gradins*, at least one family has to be left aside, precisely that of the *strategoï*.⁶¹ They were represented everywhere, as something inherent to their function. A few examples will be enough: Σέλευκος Λυσίου was the first στρατηγὸς πόλεως to appear in 33/32 BC in the sanctuary of Artemis. In the temple of Atargatis, one Εὐβούλα was the granddaughter of Lysias, *stratègos* and *epistatès* (AD 60/1) while, at the same date and in the same place, Εὐθυνίκη was wife of another *stratègos*, Seleucus.⁶² The evidence is not direct for the temple of Azzanathkona, but it is rather clear that the two sisters Asia and Timonassa, daughters of Seleucus, son of Lysias, belonged to the same family.⁶³ Likewise, other families had members attested in various temples.

Athenophila

Another example, that of Athenophila, shows that some families which were related, though not directly, to the *strategoï* were involved in the three ‘feminine’ sanctuaries.⁶⁴ Around AD 35, her name was carved on the steps of the *salles à gradins* of Artemis and Atargatis; the inscription

⁵⁸ The same person in Cumont (1926) 422–4, nos 76–8 (SEG VII, 696–8).

⁵⁹ IGLS XVII/1, 406 (= PAT 0474). One may note that in Palmyra, ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος or its Aramaic equivalent (*dy mtqr*) very often designate a remote ancestor who gave his name to the familial clan.

⁶⁰ Rep. V, 142, no. 453, cited above, with n. 452.

⁶¹ Johnson (1932) and Arnaud (1986) 147–8, with n. 53.

⁶² Artemis: Cumont (1926) 409, no. 52 (with Rep. VI, 411 for the date). Atargatis: Cumont (1926), 440–1, nos 116 and 118.

⁶³ Rep. V, 185, no. 520, and 187–8, nos 523 and 525. See Arnaud (1997), 138–9.

⁶⁴ Ἀθηνόφιλα Σελεύκου τοῦ Ἀμμωνίου τοῦ Ἀμμωνίου. She was the wife of Ἀπολλοφάνης Λυσανίου. Cumont (1926) 419, no. 69 (see above in n. 45). For her position in the genealogy of the family, see the stemma in Arnaud (1997) 142, Tab. 3.

from Azzanathkona is not dated, but should be dated to the same period.⁶⁵ Interestingly, in the temple of Artemis, the inscription belongs to the group of quasi-‘honorific’ dedications with εἰς and a verb, and it was made by her husband Apollophanès, for her and for the daughter of his tutor (see above). In the temple of Atargatis, it was her father, this time again with a kind of honorific inscription using the accusative (and the nominative for the father) instead of the pervading genitive usually used on the steps. It is impossible to understand precisely why within a few years Athenophila was thus honoured in three sanctuaries, but what should be underlined is the strong presence of her father and her husband, making it a unique case.

Her brother, Xenokratès, made a dedication to the *stratègos* Seleucus in the temple ‘of the Palmyrene gods’, contributing to this sort of infiltration of religious space by some families.⁶⁶ Xenokratès was at the same time brother-in-law of the *stratègos*.

We know less about other families, but it can be shown that some of them were represented in sanctuaries over several generations. Such was the case of the family of Theomnestos, whose members had names carved on the steps of Artemis and Azzanathkona at the beginning of the first century AD.⁶⁷ Members of the same family made several dedications in the sanctuary of Zeus Theos almost one century later.⁶⁸ What these inscriptions have in common is the constant use of the self-designation Εὐρωπαῖος,⁶⁹ showing, if necessary, how much family pride was part of the whole process. Religion was a family affair not only in the sense that one was born into it, but religious affiliations seemed to have been a choice, at least for some part of the population.

Examples are numerous,⁷⁰ but instead of dwelling on them too much, it is important to turn now to another kind of phenomenon, namely the

⁶⁵ Cumont (1926) 419, no. 69, cited above for Artemis; *Rep.* III, 42, no. 144 (*SEG* VII, 726) for Atargatis. The date was read as ηπ[τ] by the *editio princeps* (388 of the Seleucid era, i.e. AD 76/7). Considering the square letters of the Dura alphabet, which uses Π for M, it seems that the reading ημ[τ] (348 of the Seleucid era, i.e. AD 36/7) is as likely and more in line with the other inscriptions of Athenophila. For the temple of Azzanathkona, see *Rep.* V, 197, no. 548, which is dated to AD 35/6 by Arnaud (1997) 127.

⁶⁶ *Rep.* II, 91, H4 (*SEG* VII, 361): Διὶ Σωτῆρι ἀνήγειρεν Χενοκράτης Σελεύκου τοῦ Ἀμμωνίου ὑπὲρ[ρ] τῆς Σελεύκου τοῦ Λυσίου τοῦ Σελεύκου στ[ρα]τηγοῦ κ[αὶ ἐπιστ]άτου τῆς πό[λεως] σωτηρίας]. . . This same Seleucus, *stratègos*, was the husband of Εὐθυνίκη, cited above in n. 62.

⁶⁷ See stemma 4 in Arnaud (1997) 143. In Azzanathkona, *Rep.* V, 195–6, no. 544 (AD 34/5); in Artemis, Cumont (1926) 416–17, nos 64–5 (AD 32/3).

⁶⁸ AD 120/1. See *Rep.* VII/VIII, 215, no. 888 (and perhaps no. 886, AD 114).

⁶⁹ *Rep.* VII/VIII, 215, no. 888: Σέλευκος Θεομνήστου ἰς Εὐρωπαῖος and τῶν πρώτων, as his ancestors (Μεγιστῶ and Ἀδεῖα) were Εὐρωπαῖαι (*Rep.* V, 195–6, no. 544).

⁷⁰ The family of Konôn, famous from the fresco of the temple ‘of the Palmyrene gods’ (see n. 11 above) is also present in the sanctuaries of Azzanathkona and Atargatis: see *Rep.* V, 197, no. 547 (with Arnaud (1997) 137), and Cumont (1926) 436–7, nos 109–11.

existence of families documented in only one sanctuary. Dura's inscriptions reveal examples of this, even if the argumentation *e silentio* is a dangerous one. Thus, three inscriptions are the only evidence for a naos, built around AD 85 by Ἐπίνικος κῆρυξ καὶ ἱερεὺς τοῦ θεοῦ (Ἐπινίκος, priest and herald of the [anonymous] god'). It was then renovated and enlarged (ἀνακαινίσας καὶ προσθησάμην) thirty years later by Ammaios-Alexandros, son of the same Epinikos, ἱερεὺς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ κῆρυξ τῇ[ς πόλει]ως (priest of the god and herald of the city'). One year later, Alexandros erected another (?) *oikos* and its exterior (τὸ ἐξώτερον).⁷¹ This family of priests is not known elsewhere and does not seem to belong to the great families of Dura, despite the function of herald. Such is the case for other priests, like Ἀβείς Μαχχίνιος, one of 'the priests' (τῶν ἱερέων) of the temple of Artemis: Abeis is described as being only one of the priests, but he was able to make important offerings to the temple (τὴν οἰκοδόμην καὶ τὰς ψαλίδας). He or his family are not otherwise known in the evidence from Dura, but one must consider at least the existence of a hierarchy among the priests and the cultic personnel, as well as among the temples themselves and the families patronising them. Some temples were obviously used by the aristocracy of Dura, while others were the centre of worship for a smaller group (familial or ethnic). Such was the case with the 'Palmyrene' temples, where one can find a group composed more or less uniquely of Palmyrenes. In the temple of Adonis, for a later period, the great-priest of AD 157/8, Ἀνεῖνις, son of Μημαρναῖος, may have been the son of one Μημαρναῖος Ἀβιδνηρ(γαλ?) mentioned a few years later among the members of a *thiasos*. His brother, Γορναῖος Μημαρναίου, was δεσμοφύλαξ, according to an inscription of AD 181/2, and made several offerings and constructions for the temple.⁷² But this *quasi* 'dynastic' aspect must not hide the fact that there were other families among the temple functionaries, like Βαρλαῖος ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος [Λυ]σίης Βαργατοῦς, γαζοφύλαξ, who may have been the same individual as Λυσίας Βαργατοῦς in the temple of the Palmyrene gods.⁷³

The so-called *salles à gradins* only give evidence for the role of women in the religious sphere for a limited period of time, and only in three different places. It seems to have been a limited phenomenon, something of

⁷¹ *Rep.* VII/VIII, 129–30, nos 867–9: the first inscription is not dated but belongs obviously to a generation earlier than the second and the third, dated respectively AD 116/17 and 118/19. The second inscription records the renovation of the doors of the naos, as well as the outer doors, after they had been taken away by the Romans.

⁷² See *Rep.* VII/VIII, 168, no. 871 (AD 153); 168–9, no. 872 (AD 157/8); 171–2, no. 875 (AD 181/2).

⁷³ *Rep.* VII/VIII, 170–1, no. 874 (AD 179), and Cumont (1926) 361, no. 6.

a fashion, while men are overwhelmingly present in our evidence. If we compare the situation with Palmyra, one may notice that there, women were mostly concerned with what we define, perhaps wrongly, as a more personal religion, namely small dedications to the anonymous god. As far as we know, this was not the case at Dura.

Introduction

A visitor's first impression of the site of Dura-Europos is strongly influenced by the high western city walls, which can be seen from afar. It is the space directly behind these walls in particular that has yielded a large amount of well-preserved objects, because it was filled up with earth shortly before the last Sasanian attack in ca. AD 256, following which the city was abandoned.¹ Numerous well-preserved objects were found underneath these fillings, comparable to the findings at Pompeii.² The synagogue³ from the early third century AD, with unparalleled wall paintings all over the inner walls showing scenes from the Hebrew Bible, became one of the most famous findings from Dura-Europos. Moreover, a Christian building⁴ from the early third century AD was discovered not far from the main entrance. Alongside those buildings, a number of larger complexes within the walls of this small town have been identified as sanctuaries.⁵

It may seem apparent that the quantity of various cultic buildings gave structure to the ancient townscape, and that Dura served as an important centre for cult and worship. Indeed, a fleeting glance at the general plan of Dura [PLATE I] seems to reveal how the ancient town consisted predominantly of some military buildings and several temples. Visitors to the site who had previously seen the ruins of such monumental places like Palmyra and Petra might have been somewhat disappointed if they expected to see large buildings behind the impressive city wall, a rocky terrain and paved streets, or at least some high columns. However, the first impression of the

¹ Cf. Welles (1951).

² Rostovtzeff (1938a) 2f.

³ Kraeling (1956).

⁴ Kraeling (1967).

⁵ These are, apart from some shrines, the so-called temples of Artemis, of Zeus Megistos, of Atargatis, of the Gadde, of Azzanathkona, of Zeus Kyrios, of the Palmyrene gods, of Aphlad, of Zeus Theos, of Adonis, of Jupiter Dolichenus, and the necropolis temple a few hundred metres west of the Palmyra gate. See Cumont (1926) 29–164, 169–240 and 404–52; *Rep.* II, 67f. and 91ff.; *Rep.* III, 18–160; *Rep.* IV, 68ff.; *Rep.* V, 67–9, 98–200 and 290f.; *Rep.* VI, 397–415; *Rep.* VII–VIII, 135–309; Downey (1988a) 76–130; Eissfeldt (1941) 115–47.

site behind the main gate does not meet such expectations at all. In spring, one could see grass-green ground behind some earth deposits, in autumn a burnt expanse, since Dura is located in one of the hottest areas of Syria during summertime. In addition, it must be emphasised that none of the original wall paintings have been preserved *in situ*.

The magnificence of Dura is thus not revealed at first glance. ‘The Pompeii of the Syrian desert’ needs to be examined more closely before it reveals its singularity. The small site museum displayed some copies and models of Dura’s treasures, and in the museum of Deir ez-Zor, the capital of the local province, some exhibits and copies from Durene findings could be viewed. But in order to examine the original findings the interested researcher must travel to Paris or New Haven, where a large number of finds from Dura are exhibited in the Louvre and the Yale University Art Gallery. Some of Dura’s wall paintings and reliefs can also be found in the National Museum of Damascus, inside the small Dura room which is next to the large hall holding the finds from Palmyra and the impressive hall with the preserved wall paintings of the synagogue.

This paper provides an opportunity to study the convergence of groups from neighbouring cultural spheres of influence, with their specific characteristics in architecture and iconography. From the archaeological point of view it is still preferable to examine the particularities in architectural style of the so-called Syrian and Phoenician sanctuaries in the town.⁶ They may not be as monumental as some of the sanctuaries of larger ancient metropoleis, but they are equipped with some peculiarities that have not yet received a satisfying explanation. So, even if there were many more locations like Dura-Europos still waiting to be discovered, and even if the town might not have been as special as some modern scholars like to make it out, there are no other places like it known thus far. We thus have to respect and work with the evidence we have. Dura is certainly no Pompeii, but it is unique in its own right. This is due not least to the large number of different sanctuaries in relation to its size, to the good state of preservation of many of the religious buildings and to their comparatively well-documented status within the Preliminary Reports of the excavations.

The So-called *Temples*

Confusingly, the complexes of buildings in some *insulae* of the rectangular urban road system were commonly described as sanctuaries and labelled

⁶ In the following I will use the common terms and designations for the sanctuaries, as they can be found elsewhere in the current literature on Dura-Europos.

as *temples* in the excavation reports.⁷ This habit was emulated by other authors in the years to follow and has been retained until the present day.⁸ In some cases, the labelling of the whole complex within an *insula* as a *temple* is surely incorrect and may lead to confusion, and the buildings' function as a 'pure sanctuary' has therefore to be challenged. In the following I will use the term 'sanctuary' for the so-called *temples* at Dura, because it is the commonly used label and because sanctuaries were much more than places of worship in antiquity.

As we will see below, there are examples of houses built and used by associations that included sanctuary units comparable to the so-called *temples* of Dura-Europos. It is certain, therefore, that these buildings lacked any distinctiveness in the ancient world. Nevertheless, there are some specific features that now earn them our special attention.

The Syrian and Phoenician sanctuaries of Dura-Europos⁹ all have some peculiarities in common. Most feature an enclosure with a main entrance, very often located in the eastern part, a pronaos-naos unit or something similar, located opposite the main entrance, and a couple of special rooms to the sides of an open courtyard with low stony benches along their inner walls.¹⁰ Sometimes an altar was placed between the main entrance and the pronaos-naos unit. Inside the pronaos-naos units a number of reliefs, wall paintings and figurines were found, which have in most cases been interpreted as images of deities. It can therefore be assumed that embodiments of deities were arranged in different forms inside the naoi. They could be placed on a plinth as a statue,¹¹ shown on a relief inside a niche in the wall¹² or painted as frescoes on the back wall opposite the entrance.¹³

As regards the architecture of the Durene sanctuaries in general, we already know about their Babylonian prototype, the peculiarities of the spaces behind some of the walls¹⁴ around and behind the pronaos-naos units, and the illustrations which were found on some of the inner walls.¹⁵

⁷ *Rep.* II, 67f, 91ff.; *Rep.* III, 18–160; *Rep.* IV, 68ff.; *Rep.* V, 67–9, 98–200, 290f.; *Rep.* VI, 397–415; *Rep.* VII–VIII, 135–309.

⁸ E.g. Eissfeldt (1941) 115–47; Downey (1988a) 76–130; Schwarzer (2008) 168–73.

⁹ These are, as mentioned above, the so-called temples of Artemis, of Zeus Megistos, of Atargatis, of the Gadde, of Azzanathkona, of Zeus Kyrios, of the Palmyrene gods, of Aphlad, of Zeus Theos, of Adonis, and the Necropolis temple.

¹⁰ Cumont (1926) 29–164, 169–240, 404–52; *Rep.* II, 67f, 91ff.; *Rep.* III, 18–160; *Rep.* IV, 68ff.; *Rep.* V, 67–9, 98–200, 290f.; *Rep.* VI, 397–415; *Rep.* VII–VIII, 135–309; Downey (1988a) 76–130; Eissfeldt (1941), 115–47.

¹¹ Like inside the temple of Zeus Megistos.

¹² Like inside the temples of Zeus Kyrios or of Aphlad.

¹³ Like inside the temples of Zeus Theos or of Adonis.

¹⁴ Cumont (1926) 169–71; *Rep.* VII–VIII, 138f., 183, 227, 311; Nielsen (2002) 240; Downey (1988a) 124–9; Freyberger (1998) 117.

¹⁵ E.g. Rostovtzeff (1938); Perkins (1973) 33–69; Kaizer (2006) 151–9.

Rooms with Stone Benches

I would like to draw attention here to the rooms around the courtyards, since they also deserve closer scrutiny, even if no impressive wall paintings have been found there. In the cases of the temples of Artemis, of Atargatis, of the Gadde, of Zeus Kyrios, of the Palmyrene gods, of Aphlad, of Zeus Theos and of Adonis, inside the building complexes rooms were found equipped with stone benches along the walls, framing the room on two, three or even four sides. Conventionally, these rooms are referred to by the common term of 'banqueting rooms', or they are described as places for ritual dining or banquets following a sacrifice that took place on the altar in the open courtyard.¹⁶

In a comparable context N. Glueck made the followed assumptions about the events that took place inside the so-called banqueting rooms: 'seated or reclining, and afterwards resting on the benches, the faithful dined literally on the food of the gods, breaking the bread and wine and meat of communion with those whom they fondly conceived to be the sources of their welfare'.¹⁷ This description effectively attests to the Christian imprint on the author's idea, but it does not give much explanation of the possible functions of this room type. The description is based on some finds of dinnerware and amphorai in connection with the special furniture known from ancient dining rooms. For the interpretation of these, it has become commonplace to compare the special rooms inside Dura's sanctuaries with similar dining rooms inside sanctuaries elsewhere in the Near East.¹⁸ In other words, the Durene rooms are taken as a point of reference without challenging their assumed, one-sided function. However, looking at the plans, for example, of the temples of Zeus Theos or of Adonis, questions must arise over how this plenitude of similar rooms was used, and of course whether they all fulfilled the same function.

Banqueting Rooms Just for the Priests?

According to K. S. Freyberger, the banqueting rooms were exclusively reserved for the priesthood of the sanctuaries,¹⁹ and he further maintains that inside these rooms ritual dining took place following sacrifices which were performed on an altar in the open courtyard.²⁰ However, both the

¹⁶ Freyberger (1998) 114f.; Downey (1988a) 127.

¹⁷ Glueck (1965) 163.

¹⁸ Schlumberger (1951) 101ff.; Glueck (1965) 163–91; Freyberger (1998) 109.

¹⁹ Freyberger (1998) 115.

²⁰ Freyberger (1998) 114.

above-mentioned statement by N. Glueck and Freyberger's assumptions cannot be supported by the actual corpus of finds, at least not in each individual case. On the one hand, just a few of the sanctuaries at Dura seem to have had such an altar for sacrifices.²¹ On the other hand, it is easy to conclude that not all these rooms were equipped in the same way, nor did they look alike at all with respect to their architectural shape. If we consider, for example, the plan of the second-century sanctuary known as the *temple* of Zeus Theos [PLATE XXII], we can see a variety of rooms adjoining the open courtyard with a multitude of differences. Of course it is possible to divide them into specific room types, such as a temple complex consisting of pronaos and naos, side rooms, a portico, a foyer and a number of rooms to the sides of the open courtyard. Just a few of them show characteristics of the *triclinia* we know and we can justifiably name them 'bi- or triclinia'.²²

There are rooms with benches on one, two, three or even four sides amongst them. Apparently they were constructed individually. The structure of the previous building beneath the walls of the later sanctuary may have partially determined the special features of these rooms,²³ but surely the builders would not have been completely bound to the former walls with respect to each of the benches. In addition, a clear difference is the stove we can identify inside just four of the rooms in the sanctuary.²⁴ Obviously not all of these rooms fulfilled the same functions. As these two striking features show, their variety must not be overlooked, since this leads to false conclusions. Moreover, such an approach will help to explain the large number of these rooms inside Dura's sanctuaries.

The simple explanation that all these rooms served as places for ritual dining²⁵ and that all of them were reserved for the priests²⁶ cannot be maintained when the quantitative arrangement of these rooms in the sanctuary is considered. One would have to regard at least twelve of a total of sixteen rooms inside the temple complex of Zeus Theos as banqueting rooms, since these were all built in accordance with this room type. This large number casts doubt on the hypothesis that the whole sanctuary was reserved for a small elite within Dura's society.²⁷ Why would such a multitude of banqueting rooms have been built just for the priests? Why were some of the rooms

²¹ Downey (1988a) 129.

²² Downey (1988a) 76–130; Freyberger (1998) 109, 114f.

²³ Downey (1988a) 112f.

²⁴ See PLATE XXII, rooms 5, 13, 14, 16; *Rep.* VII–VIII, 183–94.

²⁵ E.g. Schlumberger (1951) 101–5 names them 'salles à manger sacrées'; Glueck (1965) 163; Downey (1988a) 92, 102–3, 114, 120; Freyberger (1998) 114.

²⁶ Freyberger (1998) 115.

²⁷ Downey (1988a) 115: 'Perhaps, the temple of Zeus Theos was erected largely at the expense of a private citizen to serve a relatively restricted group of Dura citizens, members of the

equipped with stoves, whereas most of them lack this feature? No satisfying answers to these questions have thus far been found.

A Special Location for the *Temple* of Zeus Theos

Coming from the Euphrates east of the city, the first building one can see above the wadi that leads through the town is the *temple* of Zeus Theos. Even when the surrounding buildings were still standing, this would have been the first building – or at least the first sanctuary – an ancient traveller saw when entering Dura from the east [PLATE XXIII]. If it were just a private institution for a very small part of the city's society, it would have been rather uncommon to choose such a prominent place for the sanctuary.

Usually, urban sanctuaries located at comparably prominent places were associated with the main cult of a city, a fact that has thus far not been considered with regard to the *temple* of Zeus Theos. I therefore think that the commonly held assumption, that this sanctuary was a private institution owned by and built just for the aristocracy of Dura, has to be challenged. It is a building complex full of rooms with stone benches, whereas the mostly descriptive literature on the *temple* is concerned with its fragmental wall paintings and the furnishing of its naos.

Further Cases at Dura

Another example of a second-century sanctuary of Dura is the *temple* of Adonis [PLATE XXIV], which was located opposite the synagogue from the beginning of the third century AD. Inside this sanctuary, eleven of the rooms are potential 'banqueting rooms', shaped in a similar way to the above-mentioned rooms in the *temple* of Zeus Theos, half of all the rooms inside the complex. They are located in a row at the eastern side of the building and look very similar to each other. Just one of these rooms (number 9) could be entered via the pronaos-naos complex of Adonis, which implies that this room was, in fact, reserved for the priesthood. The room to the north (room 3) was also originally entered exclusively through the pronaos, but in a later construction phase a new entrance was installed also giving access directly from the open courtyard, like all the others in the row at the east side of the sanctuary (apart from room 9). Most striking about the furnishing of these rooms is a single elevated seat of stone, which

aristocracy devoted to a particular form of Zeus. The rituals in the temple presumably did not require either a monumental altar or stairs.'

was found in most of the rooms at the east side. As K. S. Freyberger mentions, this may have been the seat of the president of the priesthood during the banquets.²⁸ In room 38 an inscription was found in which the Semitic names of eight males were listed.²⁹

This reminds us of another list, also containing eight names, which was found in the context of banquets inside room 9 of the *temple* of the Gadde [PLATE XXV].³⁰ Here, room 8, with its integrated seat rows on both sides, seems comparable to the *salles aux gradins* in the sanctuaries of Artemis,³¹ of Atargatis³² and of Azzanathkona.³³ But room 8 inside the *temple* of the Gadde can be considered with the highest certainty as a place for banquets, because in the adjacent room 9 two groups of four males were mentioned in graffiti. They were found beneath the niches on the west wall of room 9,³⁴ which Freyberger relates to the number of a college of priests that held the presidency at the banquets in honour of Zeus Belos in Palmyra.³⁵ Room 9 is usually interpreted as a storage room.³⁶ Freyberger assumes that the eight names in the Palmyrene sanctuary of the Gadde relate to the number of priests in the college at Palmyra.³⁷

Cult and Companionability

Significantly the northern part of the sanctuary of the Gadde is assumed to be the secular part, although room 9 here seems certain to be a place where only priests were admitted.³⁸ F. E. Brown describes the north complex as follows: 'In brief, the north complex, while an essential part of the whole was intended both in plan and in virtue of an important separate entrance to be an entity in itself of quasi-religious character.'³⁹

Another list of names was found in the *temple* of Aphlad [PLATE XXVI], on the wall of room 1. The inscription there records an association of eleven men, who erected an *andron*.⁴⁰ An inscription on a reused

²⁸ Freyberger (1998) 115.

²⁹ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 168, no. 871, with pl. LII.2.

³⁰ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 276–7, nos 904–5.

³¹ Cumont (1926) 183–91.

³² *Rep.* III, 18–160.

³³ *Rep.* V, 131–200; Downey (1988a) 117.

³⁴ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 276–7, nos 904–5.

³⁵ Freyberger (1998) 115.

³⁶ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 254f., 276f.; Downey (1988a) 117.

³⁷ Freyberger (1998) 115.

³⁸ Cf. *Rep.* VII–VIII, 254f.; Freyberger (1998) 115; Downey (1988a) 117.

³⁹ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 255.

⁴⁰ *Rep.* V, 113–6, no. 418; Eissfeldt (1941) 139f.; Downey (1988a) 110.

fragment in the *temple* of Atargatis [PLATE XXVII], between rooms 9 and 10, records the erection in AD 37 of a meeting place, probably a room built by an association of men consisting of two main dedicators and fifteen others, most of them with Semitic names.⁴¹ In three other rooms inside this *temple*, which were lined with benches at the walls, only Greek names can be found in the inscriptions.⁴²

The goddess Atargatis, also known as the Dea Syria, comprised a variety of aspects of other goddesses such as the Anatolian Cybele or the Babylonian Nanaia as the great mother goddess.⁴³ We know from the author Lucian of Samosata that among the visitors of the most popular temple of Atargatis at Hierapolis-Bambyce were Arabs, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Cappadocians, Cilicians and Assyrians, who brought their gifts to the temple of the goddess.⁴⁴

Lucian also describes some of the rites in the cult of Atargatis, such as long processions from the temple to a sacred lake or something similar, where the cult image was carried and washed and from where it was later brought back to the shrine.⁴⁵ It is possible that in the case of the sanctuary of Atargatis at Dura it was the Euphrates that took the place of the sacred lake.⁴⁶

The cult of Atargatis was very popular in the Syrian region. She was considered to be a mighty goddess and even made her way to Rome, where the cult of Magna Mater was connected to this deity.⁴⁷ It should not be surprising that so many different names were found in the inscriptions from the *temple* of Atargatis in Dura. The sanctuary is located near the centre of the city, and even if it is not one of the largest sanctuaries of Dura, presumably it was one of the most popular and its location meant that it must have been visited by many worshippers.

Apparently a variety of groups were responsible for the erection of some rooms inside the sanctuaries. In addition there were priests and several other individuals who donated altars or rooms for the fortune and well-being of their families. But the labelling of a room inside a sanctuary as a 'meeting place', such as the one inside the *temple* of Atargatis, indicates that there were rooms with more sociable functions, differing from the

⁴¹ Frye et al. (1955) 127–213; Downey (1988a) 103, 105.

⁴² Downey (1988a) 105.

⁴³ Lucian, *DDS* 31; Cumont (1926) 17–41; Hörig (1979) 51–261; Morin (1960); van Berg (1972); Bilde (1990), 151–87.

⁴⁴ Lucian, *DDS* 10.

⁴⁵ Lucian, *DDS* 6.

⁴⁶ Cf. Downey (1988a) 104; Freyberger (1998) 114, n. 1535.

⁴⁷ Turcan (1996) 188f.

rooms where only priests were allowed. At least some of the rooms may have satisfied different needs.

Visitors Left Outside in the Rain?

We should now consider and discuss some new aspects in our analysis of the so-called banqueting rooms. First of all, if it is correct that all the rooms around the open courtyard inside the sanctuaries were reserved for the priesthood,⁴⁸ an ancient visitor of Dura's sanctuaries would literally have been left out in the rain. The pronaos-naos complexes were reserved for priests, the banqueting rooms are supposed to have been only for priests too,⁴⁹ and if there are a few rooms left inside the sanctuaries which still have not received any allocation, they are willingly described as private rooms for the priests as well!⁵⁰

Sanctuaries with these special features can also be found outside Dura-Europos, in Greece, Jordan, the Palmyrène and in other areas and places along or nearby the ancient trade routes of the region.⁵¹ Rooms with benches, usually built with bricks or set in stone, are frequent facilities inside the sanctuaries. There must be a reason for this and, with respect to the number of rooms which occur with the shape of *bi-* or *triclinia*, or even with benches on four sides of the rooms, it seems very implausible that these were all for priests.

Hellenistic Roots of a Special Room Type

The first sanctuaries where this special room type with stone benches along the walls developed can be found on Delos.⁵² On the little Greek island in the middle of the Cyclades strict regulations were laid out in the Hellenistic period. For example, nobody was allowed to die or give birth there,⁵³ as was the convention in sanctuaries in general. The island of Delos was one of the most important religious centres of the Aegean. Just a few metres from the precinct of Apollo and the sacred lake, an association of merchants from

⁴⁸ Freyberger (1998) 115.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Downey (1988a) 105.

⁵¹ Popular examples were described amongst others by Schlumberger (1951) in the Palmyrène north-west of Palmyra, by Glueck (1965) in Khirbet Tannur, by Villeneuve and al-Muheisen (2003) in Khirbet Dharih and Khirbet Tannur, and by Schwarzer (2008) in Hatra.

⁵² Schwarzer (2007) 94.

⁵³ Hdt. 1.64; Thuc. 3.104.1.

Berytus, present-day Beirut, obtained permission to erect a house, which was partly a sanctuary and partly an emporium [PLATE XXVIII].

K. S. Freyberger has pointed out that this double function was nothing exceptional.⁵⁴ On the contrary, sanctuaries were often commercial centres and a great many of their visitors were salesmen and merchants. The commercial aspect of sanctuaries must have been crucial because of their exemption from taxation.⁵⁵ It is conceivable for example that merchants, who would not stay in the city for long periods (unlike the soldiers who were stationed there), but who would have to go there time and time again, were looking for something familiar in their environment and therefore brought an important piece of their everyday life from home along with them.

A good example is the townscape of Delos. It is well known that the island was a trading centre in the Aegean where in the middle of the second century BC merchants from the Levant were granted the right to erect sanctuaries for their own gods. The 'House of the Poseidoniasts of Berytos' and the sanctuary 'of the Syrian deities' are the most famous examples, but there were also many smallish buildings on the hillside of Mt Cynthos, where a number of Phoenician sanctuaries were located.

The priests of the sanctuary of the Syrian deities [PLATE XXIX] originally came from the main sanctuary of the Dea Syria at Hierapolis-Bambyce in northern Syria.⁵⁶ In the early phase of the sanctuary, in the middle of the second century BC, only its quadratic southern part existed, which had a plan quite similar to the plans of the other sanctuaries mentioned above.⁵⁷ The first building was erected after merchants from the Near East had gained the right to do so from the senate of Athens, as had the Poseidoniasts of Berytos, who built the house for their association near the sacred precinct.

Sanctuaries as Meeting Places for Travellers

As we have seen, merchants from the eastern Mediterranean went to places where they might have felt at home. This could have been, for example,

⁵⁴ Freyberger (2004) 8–18.

⁵⁵ Freyberger (1998) 109. Freyberger refers in this context to the sanctuaries at Seeia, Baitokaike and Khirbet Tannur.

⁵⁶ Will (1985) 9ff.; id. (1951) 77–9.

⁵⁷ Similar to the plans of the sanctuaries with an open courtyard, pronaos–naos complex and adjoining rooms to the sides of the courtyard, as we know them from Dura, Hatra, Petra, Khirbet Tannur, Khirbet Darih and from diverse sanctuaries north-west of Palmyra, besides others.

inside the sanctuary for the Syrian deities at Delos, where they encountered deities they were familiar with. The fact that the Athenians subdued the sanctuary at the end of the second century, just a few decades after its erection by merchants from the Near East, and changed the priesthood into an Athenian one,⁵⁸ indicates how anxious they were about the power of the merchants' meetings, which could have also taken the shape of conventions.

Between Petra and Jerash in present-day Jordan we find on top of a hill the sanctuary of Khirbet et-Tannur,⁵⁹ and nearby the sanctuary of Khirbet Dharih.⁶⁰ These sanctuaries were not built in or near a city, but next to a trade route on the way from Petra to Gerasa. The way to the top of the hill at Khirbet Tannur is still an arduous one today and would surely have been so in antiquity, but maybe travellers would have considered it worth the effort. Presumably refreshments were served there.⁶¹ It seems much more likely, with respect to the location of the sanctuaries on trade routes, that people wanted to rest and refresh there, as for example was presumed by N. Glueck and K. S. Freyberger. If one accepts this as accurate, the rooms with benches inside the sanctuaries where deities were worshipped in common would have been most appropriate to serve as places for relaxation.

Anyone who has travelled through the lands of the Near East and been invited into the homes of people living in the extra-urban regions near the modern lines of communication will have come across conditions similar to those revealed by our corpus of finds. The rooms inside their houses, where guests are offered tea or coffee – or both – are usually decorated with long sofas, benches or at least some drapery along the walls, in a comparable fashion to the arrangement of stone benches in the sacred buildings mentioned above. Of course this is not firm evidence for the function of the ancient rooms as places for relaxation and refreshments, but it might give an idea of practicability and plausibility.

Another observation from modern times that can be used for comparative purposes is provided by the sailors' homes in seaports, which provided supplies for travelling workers from different countries and with a variety of religions. For example, the house called 'Duckdalben' in the port area of Hamburg offers those from abroad a 'Raum der Stille',⁶² where a number of altars for those adherent to different religions are arranged. The house is a popular place where sailors go to meet, to phone their families or just

⁵⁸ Id. (1985) 9ff.

⁵⁹ Glueck (1965) 621, plan A.

⁶⁰ Markoe (2003) 89, fig. 71.

⁶¹ Glueck (1965) 163ff.

⁶² www.duckdalben.de

to stay for a brief period. Many of them go there time and time again, and know the place well. It is the social aspect of meeting other people, talking or playing together, of spending one's spare time far from home, not alone but together with others, that might be considered an essential part of human life today, as it was in antiquity.

Conclusion

We cannot be sure what exactly happened inside the rooms around the open courtyards inside the so-called *temples* of Dura-Europos. However, it is clear that they had different shapes and that they were equipped differently, some of them with stoves, some with an elevated seat next to stone benches along the walls, some located next to a *pronaos-naos* unit. The furniture of the rooms seldom seemed to follow the principles of typical *bi-* or *triclinia*. Moreover, the varying numbers of these rooms inside the sanctuary complexes implies the necessity to differentiate between their diverse functions. Some new hypotheses can be advanced, such as their use as places for relaxation, for meetings, for cooking meals on stoves and serving them following sacrifices, for assemblies of the priesthood, as well as some others. These facilities can be found at sanctuaries near the routes that many pilgrims or merchants used to travel from one city or metropolis to the next. The traditional understanding of the nature of Dura's sanctuaries therefore needs to be challenged. The so-called *temples* of Dura can at least partly be compared to houses of associations with sanctuary units, where travellers from afar came together and met each other in a comfortable setting. The so-called sanctuaries may have fulfilled this need, where deities with whom the travellers would have been familiar were worshipped.⁶³

There is no reason to assume that all rooms with stone benches along the walls were reserved for the priesthood for dining after sacrifices. Only in a few cases can that argument be supported. In many cases, however, it is possible that the rooms were multifunctional and may have served different needs on different occasions. Their mere existence inside an assumed sanctuary, which was labelled a *temple* in the excavation reports, does certainly not constitute an exclusive right of use for priests.

⁶³ Note, however, that in his contribution to this volume K. Ruffing argues that the evidence concerning the economic life of Dura-Europos does not point at all to the town's involvement in a network of long-distance trade.

9 | The Mithraeum of Dura-Europos

New Perspectives

TOMMASO GNOLI

On 10 February 1934, Clark Hopkins, the director of the excavations in Dura-Europos, and Mikhaïl Rostovtzeff, who actually supervised the digs, sent a very short telegram to Franz Cumont, who at that time was in Rome: ‘Mithrée peint découvert près votre tente. Venez.’ Just a week later, on 18 February, those scholars together with Count Du Mesnil du Buisson sent one more telegram to Cumont, now in France, from the village of Abou Kemal: ‘Peinture bas relief inscriptions importantes restons Doura jusqu’au 15 mars. Venez.’ Those final exhortations clearly show the excitement deriving from a great archaeological discovery, an extraordinary event that would inevitably bring Cumont back to Dura one more time.¹

The telegram from 10 February does not, in fact, represent the first recording of that sensational discovery. The mithraeum had actually been discovered by Du Mesnil du Buisson on 4 February, and on 6 February Rostovtzeff wrote a long letter to James Rowland Angell, President of Yale University, discussing some very important financial issues concerning the next campaign of excavations in Dura and above all the publication of the *Reports*.² A passage from that letter deserves quotation:

The day of yesterday was very exciting. Near the wall we found a fragmentary building inscription and some scratched inscriptions on fragments of columns and of coloured and white wall plaster which gives me the certainty that we are digging

¹ Cited documents in Bongard-Levin et al. (2007) 192–3, nos 104–5, respectively (‘Painted mithraeum discovered near your tent, come!’ and ‘Painting, bas relief, important inscriptions; we will stay at Dura until 15 March, come!’). Franz Cumont was the first director of the excavations at Dura-Europos and the editor of the first great publication of the results from the French mission: Cumont (1926). He pleaded the case of Dura-Europos with the highest cultural institutions in France, as can be seen e.g. in his brilliant presentation of the extraordinary potential of the site of Dura and of the first results achieved there which he published in one of the very first issues of the new journal *Syria*: Cumont (1923b). On the role played by the two great scholars Cumont and Rostovtzeff with regard to the French and American institutions, cf. now Bongard-Levine and Koshelenko (2004). An extensive history of the excavations in Dura can be found in Gelin (1997). Hopkins (1979) is of course still useful.

² For interesting documents about some financial issues regarding the mission, see Yon (1997).

I am very grateful to my good friend Ted Kaizer who invited me to the conference. To him I also owe a very warm welcome in Durham, and the improvement of the English of my text.

in a place where once stood a temple of Mithra the great god of the Roman army, protector of the Roman legions in the IIIrd century A.D. The inscription says that the temple (sacrarium) was built to the Deus Sol Invictus Mithras by the detachment of one legion at the time between 209 and 211 A.D. It is curious. When I was leaving Rome Cumont told me: now it's time to discover a temple of Mithra. And there it is. We will see what the temple is like. It was adorned with frescos anyway. What kind of frescos and in what state of preservation God knows. In any case we stand again before one of those surprises, which Dura reserves for us almost every year.³

The mithraeum was found in *insula* J7, at the north-western borders of the city, next to one of its gates. The *insula* is smaller than the other ones in the city and has an irregular shape, as it was leaning right against the city walls, which bent slightly northwards at that point because of the structure of the soil. The existence of the city gate just to the north of the *insula* made that sector of the city the favourite target of the Sasanian army in its repeated attacks on the Roman stronghold. The defenders were therefore obliged to build an embankment in that sector, burying the mithraeum and inadvertently preserving it to an extraordinary level (it is not by chance that the synagogue with its very famous frescoes was also situated next to the city walls, though more to the south). *Insula* J7 is located in the sector of the city that used to hold the Roman military camp.⁴

After its discovery, the temple of Mithras was completely dismantled and reassembled in the Yale University Art Gallery [PLATE XXX] (where it is now to be admired again⁵), but nothing remained of it on its original site. The mithraeum is one among the many monuments of Dura that have not yet received a *Final Report*. This is a serious problem, since a great amount of graffiti as well as some inscriptions were found inside the mithraeum, and, as is well known, the latter have also not been the subject of a *Final Report*. The first publication of the monument was made by a team of scholars in the *Preliminary Reports* from 1939.⁶ The mithraeum was then included in the *Corpus* by Vermaseren, who incorporated in his work a complete bibliography of all preliminary presentations of the monument by its excavators at various scientific institutions.⁷ Only many years later, in 1975, was a long text by Franz Cumont, retrieved in the Yale University archives, published by E. D. Francis in English translation. It was some sort

³ Bongard-Levine et al. (2007) 322–3, no. 13.

⁴ The border of the *castra* was located level with *insula* J8, right to the south of the one that hosted the mithraeum.

⁵ See the contribution to this volume by L. R. Brody.

⁶ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 62–134; further preliminary news esp. in Rostovtzeff (1934).

⁷ *CIMRM* I, 34–69.

of preliminary to the imminent publication of the *Final Report* of the mithraeum, which, however, has unfortunately never seen the light of day.⁸ The sculptures from the mithraeum, and in particular two bas-reliefs which both show the tauroctony, were published by Susan Downey in the *Final Report* dedicated to the sculptures of Dura.⁹ The monument, however, has obviously been the subject of a number of works dedicated to Dura and its art in general,¹⁰ to the mystery cult of Mithras¹¹ or more specifically to the cult of Mithras in Syria.¹² All these works, and particularly the methodical description by Franz Cumont mentioned above, make it unnecessary to give here a detailed description of the whole building, and allow me to concentrate more on a variety of aspects regarding the cult of Mithras in Dura-Europos that in my opinion are still without explanation.

The Mithraeum

A unique characteristic of the temple of Dura was its location in an *insula* of the city, without any section that was even partially underground.¹³ This feature can be attributed to the specific structure of the soil at the site of Dura that would not allow the digging of a *spelaeum*, rather than to specific cultic or cultural marks.

The temple acquired its definitive shape in AD 209–11, those years when Septimius Severus brought his sons Caracalla and Geta to the throne. An inscription actually reports the *templum dei Solis Invicti Mithrae* ... *restitutum ab Antonio Valentino*,¹⁴ the latter being a *primipilarius*

⁸ Cumont (1975), according to the editor and translator E. D. Francis, 'perhaps Franz Cumont's last substantial contribution to scholarship, probably completed in May of 1947, three months before his death during the night of 19th–20th August at the age of seventy-nine', cf. *ibid.* 153.

⁹ Downey (1977).

¹⁰ Rostovtzeff (1938a); Perkins (1973); Dirven (1999).

¹¹ In-depth analysis of the documents from Dura in Campbell (1969) *passim*, and Downey (1978). Obviously, a complete bibliography for the mithraeum of Dura would correspond to the literature on the mystery cult of Mithras in general.

¹² Roll (1977); Hopfe (1990); Gordon (2001).

¹³ Downey (1978) 137 compares the mithraeum of Dura to the one of Walbrook, London, which is relevant in as far as both buildings show no hypogean parts. However, the mithraeum of London had been intended like that from the outset, which is why it is provided with a clearly recognisable plan, namely of a basilical apsidal room. Apart from the evident differences between the dimensions of the two temples, the mithraeum at Dura-Europos seems to have been an existing building which had been meant originally for some other use and which was then adapted to its new function, a fact which made it indistinguishable from all other buildings around it.

¹⁴ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 85, no. 847 = *CIMRM* I, no. 53; Francis (1975) 428. This person is known from some parchments: cf. Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 25.

praepositus to the *vexillationes* of the legions *IV Scythica* and *XVI Flavia Firma*. The fact that the wall paintings were so well preserved led the excavators to maintain that further restoration with new frescoes had taken place just before the destruction of the city. As we will see below, the two tauroctonies found inside the temple are dated to AD 169 and 170/1 respectively, and both had been dedicated by officers who were in command of the Palmyrene auxiliary troops in Dura. That is why three phases of the mithraeum are postulated: the first one, when the tauroctonies were dedicated; the second one, in the Severan period, when the restoration took place; and the third one, dated just before the destruction of the city. Between the first and the second phase of the mithraeum, substantial structural transformations seem to have been made. In its second phase the mithraeum nearly doubled in size and the *spelaeum* was divided between a nave and two aisles by columns, while a niche was added in the northern wall, which gave it the characteristic aspect of a basilica. During the second phase, the mithraeum was completely decorated with frescoes that were later substantially repeated in the iconographic layout characterising the building's third phase.¹⁵ In its third phase, the mithraeum acquired the shape that was immortalised at the moment of its deliberate burial in AD 256: the paintings were restored and the artist (or perhaps one of the artists) was a certain Mareos.¹⁶ The most important structural modification of the latter phase is represented by the addition of an elevated platform, in front of the cultic niche, which could be reached by means of seven steps. Since the drop between the floor and the platform was only small, it is obvious that the seven steps were attributed a ritual value: they were the visual representation of the κλῖμαξ ἐπτάπυλος, the seven initiatory grades of Mithras's followers, just as they are described by Celsus,¹⁷ and are visible in the mithraeum of Felicissimus in Ostia.¹⁸

The cultic niche that was added in the second phase held two bas-reliefs, one above the other, both showing the most meaningful image in the mithraic cult: the killing of the primeval bull, also called the tauroctony [PLATE XXX]. I will analyse both bas-reliefs later, as they show a number of characteristics that seem to have received little explanation and that are unattested elsewhere.

¹⁵ Perkins (1973) 50; Cumont (1975) 194: 'We may conclude ... that ... the paintings destroyed in order to bring about the final restoration of the shrine had the same, or nearly the same, subjects as those which have actually been preserved.'

¹⁶ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 104, no. 853, pl. 18, 2; *ibid.* 169, n. 104, and 185, n. 183.

¹⁷ *TMMM* I, 117–18; Cumont (1931) 46–7; *id.* (1949) 186–7 and 282–3.

¹⁸ *CIMRM* I, no. 298.

On the basis of the inscriptions carved on the two tauroctonies, both dedicated by officials of the auxiliary troops stationed in Dura, Cumont concluded that:

it seems most likely that Palmyrene archers, horsemen and dromedarii in the service of Rome brought the cult of Mithra to the recently occupied city and that the cult was therefore introduced from Palmyra, which had probably maintained a Roman garrison since the time of Hadrian.¹⁹

This conclusion can only be accepted if we are absolutely sure that the dedications of the tauroctonies are related to the true beginning of the cult of Mithras in Dura. Nevertheless, even if this is possible, there remains a serious obstacle to the hypothesis: the cult of Mithras is not attested at Palmyra.²⁰ Therefore, according to most scholars, we should consider that the Palmyrene archers, who are supposed to have been *the first* to import the cult of Mithras into Dura, had picked up this cult elsewhere, for example on the riversides of the Danube, where Palmyrene units were stationed during the second century.²¹

Nevertheless, such a solution, no matter how clever it may be, does not give any satisfying answer to the question of the introduction of the cult of Mithras in Dura: why did the Palmyrene soldiers on their return from the Danube, where they are supposed to have heard about and been seduced by the cult of Mithras, immediately set up this cult in Dura but not in their homeland? Naturally, this whole discussion is based on highly uncertain foundations: the possible discovery someday of an undisputable testimony to the cult of Mithras in Palmyra might completely invert the terms of this discussion, but I do not think this is the best way to face this problem. If in Palmyra, notwithstanding its very rich religious life, no positive testimonies to the cult of Mithras have thus far been found, this is because something in the religious life of that city obstructed the diffusion of the mithraic cult. In contrast, in neighbouring Dura, where Palmyrene soldiers were amongst the founders of a temple dedicated to that deity, the cult of Mithras must have appeared to the soldiers as very similar to the Palmyrene cultic praxis. In other words, Palmyrene emigrants, either scattered far away throughout the European provinces, or living in neighbouring sites on the Oriental *limes*, were naturally inclined to embrace the cult

¹⁹ Cumont (1975) 162; Mastrocinque (2004) 162–3.

²⁰ As already noted in passing by Francis, in Cumont (1975) 162, n. 59; shared by Downey (1977) and ead. (1978), and esp. by Dirven (1999) 271. Cf. now Kaizer (2009a) 242.

²¹ On the Palmyrene units stationed on the Danube, cf. the recent proposal by Kaizer (2004).

of Mithras since it was similar to the cults of their home town, at least as far as its social and organisational patterns were concerned. This great similarity was perhaps most clear in the praxis of the ritual meals, the *marzeah*, that were widely attested in Palmyra and also represented the core of the mithraic ritual system.²²

There is one more problem about the introduction of the cult of Mithras in Dura that needs to be discussed here. All that we know about Mithraism in Dura is the history of the mithraeum in *insula* J7 itself, but there may well have been more to the cult than this. The very curious layout of the tauroctonies inside the cultic niche hints that the situation was much more complex than it appears today, and that the mithraeum in *insula* J7 was neither the only nor the first such building in Dura. The two tauroctonies were placed on top of each other, and a series of holes in the hollow space between the two pictures would seem to suggest that the lower and smaller tauroctony was usually concealed with a cloth from the initiated cult members present. Why were two identical images placed on top of one another in one and the same apsidal niche if one of the two was apparently so redundant and useless that it was veiled? It is evident that the case of Dura differs a lot from what is attested in other mithraea, above all in the Rhine area, where the two sides of complex panels portray different images, different representations of meaningful moments of the Persian god's adventures. In Dura, on the other hand, the two reliefs were substantially identical, and the differences that do exist do not imply any cultic divergence. Both show one and the same creative act: the killing of the primeval bull. In some other mithraea multiple representations of the tauroctony have also been found, and in this context a comparison with the mithraeum of Si', in the Hauran in southern Syria, may be very meaningful. Nevertheless, in those cases when it is possible to know the original location of the reliefs, it is evident that they were in completely different places. Thus, in the case of Si', one tauroctony was in the niche, as in Dura-Europos, the other on a *cippus* most probably standing at the entrance of the *spelaeum*. In some cases, the reliefs were also executed with completely different artistic techniques: in the case of Hawarte, in northern Syria, the cult relief itself is lost, but the scanty remains of a huge tauroctony painted on one of the longest walls of the central apsidal room are still preserved. In contrast, at Dura two copies of one and the same

²² This is a core problem in the interpretation of the mystery cult of Mithras and its origins and diffusion in the Roman world. This is not the place to discuss the importance and complexity of this matter. On the *marzeah* in Palmyra, cf. Kaizer (2002) 229–34; Leurini (2013) 308–11; Gnoli (2016).

cultic representation were inserted one above the other, in one and the same location behind the altar.

To me, the only possible explanation for this peculiarity in the mithraeum of *insula* J7 is that it represents the result of a synthesis of two previously existing mithraea. At a certain point in time, the second mithraeum, perhaps the smaller one, was closed and unified with the one we know. Its sacred image was transferred into the apse of the other mithraeum, which was adapted to welcome another bas-relief and probably also a wider community of adherents.

Where was the other mithraeum consecrated? Was it the only other mithraeum in Dura? But the most important question is *when* was the other mithraeum consecrated? As it is impossible to give any certain answers to these questions, it may be advisable not to exclude for the moment the possibility that Mithraism in Dura was already known *before* the expedition of Lucius Verus, and that the Palmyrene soldiers who had dedicated the reliefs might well have known the mystery cult of Mithras from elsewhere other than the Danubian border where they were supposedly posted before moving to Dura.

The Bas-reliefs

The existence of the two superimposed tauroctonies therefore poses important problems with regard to the history of the cult of Mithras in Dura. The bas-reliefs are monuments in gypsum of local craftsmanship of poor quality that hardly attracted the attention of Franz Cumont, who dealt with them in only a few words.²³ However, both representations offer very interesting elements, above all the larger one, which is two years later than the smaller one. We owe the most careful study of these reliefs to Susan Downey, whose work shall be referred to for its in-depth description and above all for the stylistic and technical comparisons with other monuments, both at Dura and elsewhere.²⁴

The Smaller Tauroctony (CIMRM I, no. 39)

The oldest relief is the smaller one. It is located right below the other one and measures 42 × 57 cm. An inscription in Palmyrenean Aramaic, carved on a *tabula ansata* below the picture of the tauroctony, reads as follows:

²³ Cumont (1975) 165–9.

²⁴ Downey (1977) and ead. (1978).

A good memorial; made by Ethpeni the strategos, son of Zabdēʾā, who is in command of the archers who are in Dura. In the month of Adar of the year 480 (AD 169).²⁵

The name and position of the dedicating person are also repeated in Greek on the left frame: Ethpaneī ἱστάρτηγα (*sic*).²⁶ The tauroctony is very simplified and lacks any reference to the *spelaeum*. The background is perfectly smooth. Mithras is dressed in Persian fashion with trousers, a short tunic and a fluttering cape. He does not wear his characteristic pointed hat, is curly-haired and represented facing the spectator and not with a turned back as usual, as if he wanted to look away from the bloody scene beneath his hands. The canonical position of the god Mithras, his left leg bent with his knee keeping the back of the dying animal pressed to the ground, is very unnatural, the bent leg being disproportionately small. Also his right arm, which stabs the bull in its carotid artery, looks too long and seems to reach beyond its target, which is the bull's neck. The bull itself is depicted in its canonical position, with its right foreleg bent to the ground and its left foreleg almost stretched out forwards, but the animal's head does not show the beauty and expressiveness that is commonly found on other reliefs. A raven flies next to Mithras's head, while a dog and a snake are portrayed in front of the bull, leaning forward over its bleeding wound. Of the snake only traces remain, as it had already been damaged in ancient times. Above the god, a lunar crescent with the star Hesperus and a solar disc are depicted, on the left and on the right respectively. Both the nine-pointed star and the solar disc were decorated with a gem that was removed when the decision was made to build the embankment and hence to destroy the sanctuary. Another gem was set in the Phrygian cap of Mithras. A number of coloured remains have allowed us to reconstruct the vivid polychromy of this relief with precision.²⁷

Above the stone, two holes drilled into the plaster held the metal staples from which a veil was probably suspended.

The Larger Tauroctony (CIMRM I, no. 40)

The other representation is larger than the first, far more elaborate and bristling with iconographic peculiarities that make it unique in the

²⁵ Translation following R. Du Mesnil de Buisson, in *RÉS* 28 (1936) no. 19 = *CIMRM* I, no. 39; also adopted by Francis (1975) 425.

²⁶ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 83, no. 845 = *AE* 1940, 267 = *CIMRM* I, no. 38 = *PAT* 1085 = Dirven (1999) no. 27. On the multilingualism in Dura, see now Kaizer (2009a) esp. 242, and also the contribution to this volume by L. Stuckenbruck.

²⁷ Campbell (1954).

extensive catalogue of mithraic tauroctonies [PLATE XXXI]. It measures 76 × 105 cm. On its base is a Greek inscription in two lines, reporting the date and dedicating person:

For the god Mithras,²⁸ Made by Zenobios who is also (called) Eiaebas, the son of Yaribol, strategos of the archers, in the year 482 (AD 170–1).²⁹

The scene is portrayed in a room with columns and a vault. The most peculiar characteristic of the relief is the presence of a large crowd witnessing the killing of the bull. Those present actually occupy about a third of the room, delimited by the columns, which is absolutely extraordinary. From the upper corners outside the vault two characters, certainly Luna and Sol, also witness the bloody scene. The vault is decorated with the twelve signs of the zodiac, interrupted in the middle by the bust of a bearded character wearing a *kalathos*. The zodiac sign to the extreme left of the arch is the Ram, while the last is the Fish; all figurines but the Crab and the Archer are turned towards the left. Small astral signs are superimposed on these figurines, which leads one to suspect that this might conceal some sort of horoscope.³⁰

Mithras makes his customary bloody gesture in his usual position, but because of the incompetence of the sculptor the left leg of the god, bent as if to press the animal to the ground, seems to fail in its purpose. The right arm of the god stabbing the bull is too long, but is bent to reach the bull's neck, while his left arm lifts the animal's head, firmly holding it by its nostrils. The bull is portrayed in its customary position with one foreleg bent with the knee on the ground and the other stretched forward. Between its knee and the hoof of its left foreleg seven small spheres are depicted in line. The other regular attendants at the tauroctony (the raven, the dog and the snake) are all there, but they are very small. In both tauroctonies the scorpion is missing.³¹

The absence of the scorpion and of the spike on top of the bull's tail, the inverted position of Sol and Luna and further such small differences led Cumont to maintain that he was in the presence of a 'Syrian' model of the tauroctony that had directly derived from an 'Anatolian' model. This had then been superseded by the 'Roman' pattern that in the meantime

²⁸ On the stone θεοῦ Μίθραν.

²⁹ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 84–5, no. 846 = *CIMRM* I, no. 41 = Dirven (1999) no. 29; cf. Milik (1972) 336; Francis (1975) 427.

³⁰ The most complete description of the Zodiac is in *CIMRM* I, no. 40, with corrections by Beck (1984) 2017, n. 23, 'based on autopsy at the Yale University Art Gallery'.

³¹ On which see Beck (1976).

had become orthodox. This interpretation has rightly been disputed by almost all scholars who have studied the mithraic testimonies from the Near East in general.³² What makes this relief so unique is not only the lack of details (which can be either present or missing in such representations without invalidating their meaning, as far as can be assessed), but rather the presence of two unique elements: the seven small spheres between the bull's forelegs and the audience that occupies half of the scene. However, for these two elements, though they remain very difficult to explain, corresponding features can be found on other tauroctonies that have recently been discovered in the Near East.

The Seven Globes

The seven spheres of the Dura relief had been hypothetically compared with the seven fire altars that occur in some other tauroctonies. However, the location of these elements, in a row between the forelegs of the bull, is completely different from that of the altars, which are portrayed under a starry sky on top of the grotto. In addition, the shape of the small trapezoidal altars is utterly different from the small globes of Dura. The most interesting and meaningful comparison is that proposed by Albert de Jong, who has published a tauroctony recently acquired on the antiquarian market by the Museum of Jerusalem, and whose thesis has been summarised by Lucinda Dirven.³³ This new mithraic relief is surrounded with secondary scenes, as is particularly common in the reliefs coming from the Danubian area. The first one shows a character with a Phrygian hat below, sitting on a stone and holding an unidentifiable object in his right hand. A stream flows down immediately to his right. Beside the stream, seven spheres lie piled up. We should consider how these piled globes of the Jerusalem relief and the seven globes perfectly organised in a row in the tauroctony at Dura can be interpreted.

In the whole of the Indo-Iranian tradition, Mithras is the cosmocrator deity who stands out of time and who organises time.³⁴ He is the god who with his action grants the advancing of the cosmic eras. It is within this tradition that I choose to interpret the iconography of the seven globules

³² Cf. *supra*, n. 12. The only substantial exception is by Campbell (1969), who resumes and deepens Cumont's approach.

³³ De Jong (1997); Dirven (1999) 270.

³⁴ As will become clear in what follows, I will take a position on the applicability to mithraism of Iranian models that some might find controversial. Cf. now the recent article by Dirven and McCarty (2014), confirming the continued lack of agreement amongst scholars working on this field.

in both tauroctonies. In the one now at Jerusalem, we should imagine the vignettes around the central scene as starting from the left lower end, then up to the top and down to the right end (as it certainly should do, considering a variety of details): so we should follow the story from its beginnings, when the seven globes lie on the ground in a pile at the edge. On the top of the relief seven stars are portrayed as shining in a row after the organising work of Mithras has been done, thus when the cosmic order has already been established. The same alignment of the planets is represented in the relief of Dura in the shape of small globes between the bull's forelegs. Merkelbach, at the beginning of his *Mithras*, peremptorily stated:

Die Mithrasmysterien waren eine Sternenreligion. Die sieben Planeten des geozentrischen Systems waren in eine feste Beziehung zu den sieben Weihegraden der Mysterien gesetzt; dem Aufstieg des lebenden Mysten durch diesen sieben Grade entsprach nach seinem Tod ein Aufstieg seiner Seele durch die Sphären der sieben Planeten zum Fixsternhimmel.³⁵

Mithras is also represented with his typical pointed hat in one of the great heads at Nemrud Dag, ³⁶ where his hat is decorated with seven discs in a vertical row, evidently recalling the seven globes, also to be linked to the peculiar characteristics of the sceptre of the god Nergal in a second-century AD bas-relief from Hatra with seven rings that are evidently bound to the seven planets.³⁷ Moreover, the Sun deities in the Iranian context around the beginning of our era were provided with a symbolism of 'six + one units': a bas-relief from Hatra shows the Sun god with a standard resembling that of Nergal but with just six circles, as the seventh unit, the sun, was represented by the figure of the god himself.

Another relief found at Nemrud Dag represents a lunar deity, with a hat similar to that of Mithras, decorated with fourteen discs or globes, recalling the lunar phases. These specific features occur also in a Parthian Manichaean text, which dates at least to the third century AD, in which the chariot of the moon is described as follows: 'And he built the chariot of the moon ... and each wall (of the chariot) he gave fourteen gates.'³⁸

³⁵ Merkelbach, (1984) 1 ('The mysteries of Mithras concerned astral religion. The seven planets of the geocentric system were placed in a fixed relation to the seven grades of initiation within the mysteries. The ascent through these seven grades by the initiated person during his lifetime conformed to the ascent of his soul, after his death, through the spheres of the seven planets to the heaven of the fixed star').

³⁶ In this context, one ought to allude to the hypothesis of Beck (1998) on the origins of Roman Mithraism in Commagene.

³⁷ Ghirshman (1962) pl. 98.

³⁸ Sundermann (1973) 63.

Another Parthian fragment, preserved in the most precious collection of the *Turfanforschung* of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, contains a hymn to a specific deity. He is usually known as 'Third Messenger', but in Iranian texts is called 'Mihr Yazad', the god Mithras. In this hymn, Mithras as chronocrator is evidently bound to the computation of time subdivided in the text in gradually reduced time units. However, it adds further information on the peculiarities of this god:

M 67: Be blessed Mihr Yazad (god Mithras), great Light. You are the splendour and brightness of the seven parts of the world ... The seven parts of the whole world are arranged according to the route of the Judge to the East, West, North and South ... always he runs from the North to the East, from the East to the South, from the South to the West.

The assumption that the world was divided into seven continents has been well diffused in the Iranian world since ancient times. It is already attested in the *Avesta*, and the subdivision of the earthly world according to the number seven was evidently connected to the cosmic order and the movement of the seven planets. Consequently, the number seven was very important in the cult of Mithras, as it was in all cults with an astral background, since at this point it is perfectly clear that Mithras had been a great cosmic god in India as much as in Iran and Rome, and his cult had always been centred around astral features. The piled up globes in the relief at Jerusalem are to be interpreted as the planets at the beginning of a cosmogonic process, while the killing of the bull in the relief of Dura shows the cosmic order being established in the same cosmogonic process as represented in the alignment of the astral bodies below the forelegs of the bull.

The 'public'

Five characters witness the scene, four of them arranged in two rows, one above the other, with the ones below of smaller dimensions than those above, while a much taller character clad in a toga and with *lorica* stands on the right. I cite the description published in *CIMRM*, which is in fact a synthesis of that published in the *Preliminary Report*:

The largest figure is Zenobius who stands on a square stone base near the right column. On the left hand side of the same base stands a small thymiaterion upon which Zenobius places incense with his right hand. He is clothed in an undergarment with half length sleeves cut in heavy folds. The upper garment is a mantle which forms a skirt reaching to the tops of his shoes. Zenobios is unbearded and faces front. He wears a small skull cap. To the right of Zenobius is a ledge supported by two Atlantes-like kneeling figures. On this ledge two smaller persons

are standing, whose names as well as that of Zenobios have been cut out near their heads: Jariboles and Barnaadath. Both wear trousers; their upper garments extend down to the knee; Jariboles only wears a mantle. He carries a sword attached to a belt about his hips; his left hand rests on the sword at his side, but his right arm is lifted. Barnaadath presses his left hand across his left hip; with his right arm raised he makes a gesture of adoration by turning the palm to the front, extending the thumb, and doubling the fingers into the palm.

The interpretation of this scene, which is unparalleled in any other mithraic relief known so far, creates huge problems. While there is no doubt about the identity of the person clad in military clothes offering a sacrifice on the *thymiaterion* (he is certainly the *strategos* who dedicated the relief), the other two couples are bewildering. Since Zenobios is called 'son of Yari-bol' in the inscription, we can deduce that either the two characters above were the forefathers (for example father and grandfather) of Zenobios, supported by a couple of Atlantes (thus e.g. Rostovtzeff), or that they were the sons of the dedicant, one of whom bearing the name of his grandfather, with the two anonymous figures kneeling below interpreted as the dedicant's grandsons (an explanation preferred by Cumont).³⁹

Both interpretations are, however, unsatisfactory. Dirven has rightly noticed that family bonds were of little or no importance in the mithraic communities. Moreover, if the name of one of the characters, Yari-bol, seems to support some sort of family bond with Zenobios, the other name, Barnaadath, is not even Palmyrene: on the contrary, in this precise form it is a *hapax*. However, the solution proposed by Dirven, to interpret the group of characters as members of the mithraic community, with all four of them also being members of the auxiliary unit under the command of Zenobios, encounters insurmountable difficulties: the four characters are portrayed on two different rows; the ones above are taller and literally stamp on the ones below, who kneel and look as if they have to support those above them. The two bigger characters are identified by their names, while those below are not. One might of course resort to the hypothesis that the characters placed beneath were of lower initiatory rank, but it

³⁹ Cumont (1975) 167: 'Zenobius, the father, is pouring a libation on the altar. His two sons are standing on a ledge to his right and, according to the rule of isoecephaly, they are represented as smaller than he. One of them, named Barnaadath, wears a simple tunic and raises his right hand with his palm turned forwards, his thumb extended, and his fingers doubled into his palm. The other seems to be making the same familiar gesture of adoration. He is dressed in a military costume and wears the paludamentum; his left hand rests on his sword, which hangs from a belt at his waist. Like his grandfather's, his name is Iariboles. Beneath Barnaadath and Iariboles we see two small kneeling figures. At first sight they might be taken to represent Atlantes supporting the ledge, but it is more likely that they are the grandchildren of Zenobius, placed below their parents.'

would be quite curious if this was the arrangement of a cultic community which is portrayed while witnessing the most important and meaningful act of its religious experience.

Another mithraeum, recently discovered in northern Syria, may come to our aid here. One of the most surprising scenes on the richly depicted walls of the temple discovered under the floor of a church in Hawarte in the territory of Apamea, recently published by Michał Gawlikowski, is that which was portrayed in identical fashion on both jambs of a door leading into the *cella* of the mithraeum.⁴⁰ On each of these panels a figure standing in front of a horse was depicted. Both figures are clad in rich multi-coloured clothes embroidered with gems, like Persian princes. On both panels, the upper section of the representation is completely lost. The two characters are depicted according to the *Darstellungstypus* of the Dioscuri, as it is widely attested in classical art. I have treated the subject of the representation of the 'Dioscuri' with reference to this Syrian portrayal elsewhere,⁴¹ and I intend to deal with the issue in a more complete treatment related to this argument. What might connect the fresco of Hawarte to the tauroctony of Dura is certainly not the subject of the Dioscuri as such. Nothing in the portrayal of Yaribol and Barnaadath even vaguely recalls the iconographic motif of the mythical twins. In the fresco, however, the best preserved horseman keeps on a lead a small, two-headed, black and naked demonic creature, which is represented in a corner of the fresco [PLATE XXXII]. This creature is crushed by the magnificence of the main figure and is confined almost outside the frame of the scene. Is it not possible to find some thematic resemblance between this demonic figure and the anonymous creatures depicted as smaller than, and being stamped on by, Yaribol and Barnaadath?

In my opinion Erwin Goodenough was right when he suspected that two deities were concealed behind Yaribol and Barnaadath.⁴² However, too many questions are still bound to the onomastics of Barnaadath and its etymology (more analogous to a Parthian pattern rather than to a Semitic one, *pace* Milik),⁴³ and this does not allow us to maintain with certainty

⁴⁰ Gawlikowski (2007) 353, figs 9 and 9a.

⁴¹ Gnoli (2009).

⁴² Goodenough (1964) 79.

⁴³ Milik (1972) 336–7: 'Le premier fils porte le nom de son grand-père *Yarhibôlê*, tandis que le second fils porte le nom original, un hapax à mon connaissance, de *Barna-hadat*, "Notre fils est neuf"' ('The first son bears the name of his grandfather *Yarhibôlê*, while the second son bears the original name *Barna-hadat*, "Our son is new", a hapax as far as I am concerned'). This etymology of this name takes a Semitic derivation (*bar* + *na*) into account, but it is not the only possible one. I will deal with this important subject elsewhere. Dirven (1999) 266–7 suggested a misspelling of the name Barhadad, a *lectio facilior*.

that this tauroctony, located at the extreme borders of the Roman empire, may reveal the identity of the twin characters so often portrayed in mithraic mythology. However, the hypothesis I have outlined above, namely that we should consider the two characters squashed under the weight of the warriors Yaribol and Barnaadath as wicked demons of a kind similar to the one depicted in the fresco of Hawarte, may well be our only opportunity to make logical and understandable the curious representation of the 'public' witnessing the tauroctony on the larger of the two reliefs of Dura.

The Frescoes

The most extraordinary aspect of the mithraeum of Dura is its frescoes. I have already hinted at the fact that they were the work of a certain Mareos, who was evidently initiated into the mysteries of the Persian god. In an inscription located above and on the left of the richly painted *arcosolium*, Mareos receives the formula of benediction, *nama*, that is typical among the adepts of Mithras.⁴⁴ It is not surprising that the representation of the complex secret vicissitudes of this god was left to the responsibility of an initiated person. Unfortunately, this affected the artistic quality of the frescoes. The scenes show a very limited polychromy and reveal a raw and unrefined hand. I agree with Dirven's idea that Mareos was a local artist with basic artistic skills, as it seems quite unlikely that the worshippers of Mithras would have called in an artist with such limited abilities from abroad.

However, these frescoes are not important from an artistic point of view. The images are concentrated around the *arcosolium* and on the long walls of the room. Around the upper part of the niche hosting the biggest tauroctony are thirteen scenes from Mithras's adventures, painted within trapezoidal frames.⁴⁵ A larger scene forms the keystone of the arch, which had thus six scenes on either side. In this central scene Saturn was portrayed as bearded and veiled and holding a *harpè* in his hand. The two scenes below on the left are lost, and the first recognisable scene on the left (i.e. the third of the series) shows Mithras as he emerges from a blazing stone. The following scene shows Saturn lying on rocks. The representation of two snake-footed giants follows. They are depicted as running away and as about to throw a big stone respectively. The last picture on the left portrays a bearded Jupiter with nimbus who throws blizzards against the giants of

⁴⁴ CIMRM I, no. 46: Νάμα Μαρέω ζωγράφω. See e.g. the painted inscription CIMRM I, no. 54, from this same mithraeum.

⁴⁵ CIMRM I, no. 42.

the preceding scene. On the other side of the arch, going down towards the right, Mithras is portrayed shooting an arrow against a rock. In the following scene Mithras is on the back of the bull, making apotropaic gestures with one hand and holding a red globe in the other. In the following scene Mithras carries the bull towards a cave, and the next picture shows Sol naked and kneeling in front of Mithras, who lays his left hand on Sol's head. In the penultimate scene Cautes and Cautopates carry away the bull's carcass, while the last scene depicts a banquet with Mithras and Sol, who receive the bull's flesh from a raven-headed man while raising their glasses.

In the final restoration, the vault of the niche was painted with a starry sky against which the zodiac signs were silhouetted.⁴⁶ However, remains of the preceding plaster have been preserved, and they show two characters with Phrygian hats.

The external sector of the *arcosolium* was also richly painted. On both sides two characters are depicted sitting on a throne in hieratic posture, wearing Persian–Palmyrene clothes.⁴⁷ Both hold a white roll and a *barsoma* in their hands, while above, over the arch of the niche, another tauroctony was portrayed. This is now almost completely lost, but in the lower left corner the signature of the painter Mareos survives. Compared with the bas-reliefs in the niche, one should note the presence of two torch-bearers and of the scorpion on the scanty remains of the tauroctony in the fresco, while in a marginal scene the birth of Mithras from a cypress is depicted. For the rest, however, the fresco is lost.⁴⁸

There are traces of paintings everywhere in the mithraeum. In particular a number of large heads are attested in the earlier layers,⁴⁹ which shows that the representations on the walls of the mithraeum had changed significantly. On the southern wall of the cella, the one opposite the apse, the banquet of Mithras and Sol was represented, of which some clear though not so meaningful traces still remain. The two representations that made the mithraeum of Dura so famous are the hunting scenes of Mithras on the long walls of the cella, above the benches of the worshippers.⁵⁰ The fresco on the left is best preserved: a riding Mithras shoots arrows against a number of wild animals fleeing from him; he is assisted by a long snake slithering under his horse and by a lion preceding him; all the other animals

⁴⁶ *CIMRM* I, no. 43.

⁴⁷ *CIMRM* I, no. 44.

⁴⁸ *CIMRM* I, no. 45.

⁴⁹ *CIMRM* I, no. 47.

⁵⁰ *CIMRM* I, no. 52 = *Rep.* VII–VIII, 112–13, pls 14–15. On this scene, cf. esp. Rostovtzeff (1935) 280–1; Cumont (1975) 186–92.

(deer, antelopes and wild boar⁵¹) have been struck by the god's arrows. The background of this huge scene is a stylised forest. On the right side of the room there is an analogous scene, but its preservation is so poor that it does not allow us to note any details that might have differentiated it from the other fresco. The only evidence of this is that the snake is substituted by the lion, while another lion seems to act as one of the quarries of the hunting god. This subject was very rare before its discovery at Dura, and examples were limited to the mithraeum of Osterburken. That is why Cumont had expressed (wrongly, as he later recognised) some doubts about the relevance of these scenes to the cult of Mithras.⁵² The depiction of hunting had been very customary in the Graeco-Roman world since the model of 'Alexander's hunting', where the horseman is portrayed spearing a wild beast. This model would soon be acquired by Meleager and the Calydonian Boar, and would reach Late Antiquity in the representation of St George killing the dragon. However, this is not the *Darstellungstypus* of the hunting at the Dura mithraeum. The latter's model is far more ancient. The horseman facing the spectators hits the animals with arrows from a Persian bow. The representation is based on an Assyrian model that became very popular in Parthian and Sasanian art. The clothes of the god and his arms are unmistakable in this respect.

Conclusions

For the last three decades scientific research on the mystery cult of Mithras in the Roman world has been following a path that diverges significantly from that traced by Cumont at the beginning of the twentieth century. Instead of considering Mithraism as a religious movement of Iranian origin that was later transplanted into Anatolia and from there diffused into the Roman world in imperial times, the new interpretative paradigm (counting among its main representatives Roger Beck, Richard Gordon and Manfred Clauss) considers the mystery cult of Mithras a western creation derived from a trend diffused in the Roman world, a sort of *perserie*, to be understood only in the frame of the Graeco-Roman cultural and religious world, rather than in the Iranian sphere.

However, the new archaeological discoveries of the last ten years have created difficulties for this paradigm and emphasised its limits. The interpretation of the mithraeum of Dura-Europos which I have given above

⁵¹ The animals in this painting were studied specifically by G. Evelyn Hutchinson, Appendix 13.2 in Cumont (1975) 210–14.

⁵² Cumont (1975) 187–8 and n. 198. Cf. *TMMM* II, no. 310.

clearly shows that the cultural referents of the unknown sculptors who carved the bas-reliefs, as well as those of Mareos and his possible colleagues who painted the frescoes, can be traced back to a cultural context that extends from the Mediterranean coast to the Indus valley and that has the Iranian plateau as its backbone – not only from a geographical point of view because of its central position, but rather more and, I would say, above all for the surprising and inextinguishable religious creative skills that have always characterised Iran. Mithras is the same deity who, with Varuna, plays a central role in Vedic India. He was acquired as one of the *yazata*, minor gods under the authority of Ahura Mazda, in the religious reform by Zoroaster in Iran, and then, through the mediation of Egyptian astrological doctrines elaborated in Hellenistic times,⁵³ he went on living his life partly underground in caves scattered around the Graeco-Roman world, where he was repetitively portrayed in the extraordinarily important act of killing the bull. It is the astonishing flexibility of this god that makes it so difficult for us to seize the ‘personalities of Mithras’⁵⁴ in the total absence of religious texts.

⁵³ It is impossible to hint at this subject, and I limit myself to recall Pingree (1997).

⁵⁴ This is the title of the monograph by Bivar (1998).

Suggestions for Urban Paths

CRISTINA MARTA ACQUA

It is evident that Dura-Europos constituted a multicultural centre, since at least locals, Palmyrenes, Jews and Roman veterans lived there together.¹ The identity of these groups was expressed in part by the celebration of their cults in specific and different spaces, so that in Dura in Roman times a large number of temples and gods coexisted, venerated in various and manifold ways.² Rather than analysing how Roman imperial power was introduced and affirmed in Dura, I want to focus on how it took a concrete form, in building types and possible urban paths, and to investigate whether this approach can help to give a clearer view both of the cultic and cultural life of the city and of its urban layout.

In Dura-Europos different strategies were being created in the two focal poles of the city – the military area, which was situated in its northern part,³ and the civic centre – in order to introduce and establish the Roman presence as a component of its cultural life. In the first case, the marking of the physical and ideological presence of the emperor was necessarily a part of army life: he was the commander-in-chief of the whole army, to be honoured in the individual units in a tangible way. As in the other parts of the empire, the soldiers performed certain acts of worship within the imperial cult, which also served to increase their sense of belonging to Rome. This was commonly expressed through the worship of the *signa*, so that it was probably necessary also in Dura to provide specific spaces within (or close to) the *castrum* to keep the standards and to allow for the holding of events

¹ See, e.g., Welles (1951) and especially Dirven (1999). Dura was briefly seized by the Romans during the reign of Trajan, but the real and continuous occupation began in the 160s with the Parthian campaigns of Lucius Verus, continuing until the fall of the city during the Sasanian conquest.

² On the cultural components of Dura-Europos see Pollard (1996), Dirven (1999), Elsner (2001) and Sommer (2004).

³ The existence of a physical division between the military area and the civic centre is confirmed by the wall found between T 20 and T 21. See James (2007) with previous bibliography.

I must first of all thank Ted Kaizer for the opportunity to participate in the colloquium and to contribute to this volume, and also Achim Lichtenberger. This paper has also been greatly improved by the critical and valuable comments of the participants of the conference, especially those of Susan Downey, Lucinda Dirven and Simon James. I must add also a special thanks to Peter Alpass and Michael Blömer for their great help.

in their honour. In the second case, it is more difficult to assert the strength of the presence of the imperial family in the common life of the Durenes, even when we are faced with the occurrence, mainly in the city's temples, of statues and inscriptions to the emperors and their families, which confirm the existence of honours to the imperial family.

After a brief introduction to my approach, this article will analyse the various pieces of evidence relating to imperial representations in these two areas of the city, according to the different categories of monuments. Starting from a Roman point of view, the aim is not only to investigate the data in their respective contexts, but also to underline similarities, differences and prospective links between the military and the civic areas, and to highlight any urban paths that may have been related to representations of the emperor.

A Methodological Approach: The Notion of 'Imperial Representation' and the Importance of Context

A clarification of the phrase 'imperial representation' is required. In fact, the word 'representation' sounds, at first glance, like a simple, almost self-explanatory, notion. However, according to the dictionary its primary meaning is 'to stand for; to symbolise' or 'to indicate or communicate by signs or symbols', followed by 'to depict in art; to portray'. Since the birth of processual archaeology, the history of archaeological thought has largely demonstrated how difficult it is to define and analyse symbols, and also that the interpretation of symbols is actually one of the most ambitious goals of archaeological research.⁴ Moreover, in the theoretical field of Roman archaeology, the unquestionable importance of art for looking at representation (and perception) has been an object of study since the publication of the seminal works of P. Zanker and T. Hölscher.⁵ Both scholars stressed the importance of the context in which the image was set,⁶ and the notion of *Bildprogramm* has been refined and improved since the definition of visual imagery as a recognisable language, with the purpose of conveying a message or invoking ideas which would be intelligible to the addressees, who were, in most cases, the inhabitants either of individual cities or of the empire as a whole.⁷

⁴ See most recently Balter (2005), with previous bibliography.

⁵ Zanker (1987); Hölscher (1987). See de Blois and Hekster (2003) ix–x.

⁶ For an extra-archaeological approach, see e.g. Eco (1975).

⁷ Hölscher (1987) 74. See also Elsner (1995); id. (1998); id. (2007a). For a more in-depth study of the concept of representation, together with those of auto-celebration and propaganda, see Weber and Zimmermann (2003) esp. 11–124.

From these brief remarks it becomes clear that, as a first step, it is always necessary to define the *object of representation*. The word *object* necessarily implies physical evidence, which is why I propose to take into account all the forms of the archaeological material (monuments, sculptures, coins⁸ and inscriptions) that relate to the reigning emperor or his family in the city of Dura. However, as written above, the object by itself tells us almost nothing unless it is set in a wider context, which can serve to find and understand any secondary meaning. Thus far, little work has been done on the relationships between images and the spaces in which they were situated, and between these particular spaces and their role within the general plan of the city. However, I should like to consider these fields of study a necessary broadening of the concept of *Bildprogramm*. An investigation of urban planning programmes can give a privileged point of view in order to understand to what extent the physical representation of the political (and cultural) power was part of city life, and whether it was imposed by the Romans or freely accepted – and perhaps promoted – by that city, as a whole or in part, for example the elite. Due to its multicultural characteristics, Dura-Europos is a perfect example on which to test this hypothesis.

Analysis of the Evidence: The Military Area

Religio Romanorum tota castrensis signa veneratur, signa iurat, signa omnibus deis praeponit (Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 16.8)⁹

The military quarter¹⁰ took over a substantial sector in the northern part of the city, which became the main area where the soldiers' barracks and the buildings related to administrative military duties and other facilities (for example baths and amphitheatre) were located. The military area was physically separated from the rest of the city, divided at least by a wall running across blocks K7, K5, K3 and K1.¹¹ Here, various buildings were set up with the dual purpose of serving military duties and providing a physical expression of Roman identity.

⁸ Since Dura did not have its own mint, the numismatic evidence is not actually included in the present study. For a complete account of the coins found in the city, see Bellinger (1949).

⁹ 'The whole religion of the Roman camp consists in worshipping the standards, in swearing by the standards, and in setting the standards above all the gods' (transl. A. Souter).

¹⁰ For the definition of the military area, see James (2004) and id. (2007). For a visual definition, see PLATE XXXIII.

¹¹ James (2007) 31, also for a definition of the area occupied by the military camp *strictu sensu*. Here, we define as the military area the whole northern part of the city, as long as it presents buildings sharing the same military and ideological intent, even if outside the military camp proper.

The most important building is surely the **complex of the *principia***, located in Block E7 [PLATE XXXIV]. It was built in the third century AD and dedicated to Caracalla and Julia Domna.¹² In their plan, Dura's *principia* are typical of structures of their kind, such as the nearest one in Palmyra. They consisted of a fore-hall extending across the main street, a large, square colonnaded courtyard, a cross-hall (the so-called transversal basilica) and a row of rooms at the rear.¹³ Their central room played the role of *aedes signorum*.¹⁴ In the transversal basilica, two pilasters were placed flanking the door to the central room. The one on the left bore a monumental dedication to Geta, while the inscription on the right, which was painted instead of cut, is entirely effaced except for a few letters. C. Hopkins suggested that the pilasters might have supported busts of Caracalla and Geta.¹⁵ The rooms on either side of the *aedes* served as offices and places to keep documents, as confirmed by a dipinto (found in the corridor between rooms 8 and 9, with some other fragments in each of those two rooms) that mentions a *librarius* and four *auditores* serving with the *legio IV Scythica*,¹⁶ who set up a *spem bonam* (a wish of promotion) invoking the emperor and the Senate and People of Rome.¹⁷ There are also other inscriptions mentioning the emperor as the addressee, such as the ones found in room 4.¹⁸

In the *Preliminary Reports* no finds are listed as discovered within the *saeculum* and the offices, but in the outside courtyard two altars were found, one probably in a disturbed context, but the other *in situ*.¹⁹ The latter was

¹² *Rep.* V, 218–20, no. 556. On the complex of the *principia* / *praetorium*, see also Reeves (2004) 142–5.

¹³ Polyb. 6.27–32; Ps.-Hyg. *De mun. castr.*, passim. For comparisons see, e.g., for the West, Johnson (1983), and for the East, Gregory (1995–7). On Palmyra, see esp. Fellmann (1976); Gawlikowski (1984) and id. (1985).

¹⁴ *Rep.* V, 201–37 and esp. 214: ‘The floor of the room is made of hard plaster mixed with pebbles and laid on a foundation of stone. Two holes (0.13 and 0.125 m in diameter) had been introduced some 0.87 and 0.73 m from the east wall.’ Hopkins suggested that ‘wooden supports had probably been introduced into these holes to form the base of a table or shelf; perhaps the table supported the altar or special cult objects, possibly they merely formed stands for the standards’, see *ibid.* 214.

¹⁵ *Rep.* V, 214 and 218–20, no. 556. See also Downey (1977) 149. Geta’s inscription was erected by *Antonini Europaei*, the soldiers of the *vexillationes* stationed at Dura. Cf. *Rep.* V, 221–4, nos 558–9.

¹⁶ *Rep.* V, 224–6, no. 560. The letters were painted black on white plaster.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.* An Aramaic inscription suggests a date between AD 222–3, thus during Severus Alexander’s pro-senatorial reign.

¹⁸ *Rep.* V, 230–1, nos 564 and 566.

¹⁹ *Rep.* V, 211. The first altar is just defined as a ‘crude little stone altar (E 598), its top supported by four columns, found in the southwest corner’ of the courtyard; the other is described also with measurements: ‘Some six and quarter meters from the main doorway was placed a large altar, 2.10 m by 1.83 m with a series of small steps leading to the top.’

an altar fronted by steps which was located near the centre of the courtyard.²⁰ Even without clear evidence from inside the *sacellum*, the function of the *principia* is evident. On the one hand they formed an administrative centre, on the other they had a religious nature too: the altar and the shrine of the standards, built even before the headquarters were completed, testify to the importance of housing the military standards and of honouring them in a properly sacrosanct environment.²¹ Hence, the presence of the emperor and his family in this space was fundamental, remembered not only in the inscriptions and the statues, but also (perhaps more importantly) in the *signa* themselves.

The construction of the *principia* also involved, towards the back, the **temple of Artemis Azzanathkona** [PLATE XXXV].²² This temple, whose dedication is dated to AD 161,²³ is also located in Block E7, directly behind the *principia*. Inside (to be precise in room W 12), a dedication to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and to other gods, in honour of Septimius Severus, was also found.²⁴ Moreover the three rooms of the temple (W 12, W 13 and W 14) were used to store military documents.²⁵ In room W 14 a prayer to Zeus Kyrios,²⁶ dedications to Fortuna and Victoria²⁷ and some drawings were found.²⁸

The most important drawing was the one in the middle of the west wall, portraying a scene of sacrifice [PLATE XXXVI]. Its value lies in its close similarity to the fresco from the temple of the Palmyrene gods [PLATE II], which is described below. In the centre is a god with radiate head standing on a pedestal, who is identified as Yarhibol.²⁹ On the right a winged Victory

²⁰ We have comparisons with *principia* both in the East (see again the nearest one in Palmyra) and in the West. According to *Rep.* V, 211, such a feature is considered uncommon and instead influenced by the local temple plans.

²¹ Reeves (2004) 145.

²² For a complete description, see *Rep.* V, 131–200.

²³ *Rep.* V, 131 and 142–5, no. 453.

²⁴ *Rep.* V, 226–9, no. 561. It is painted in red letters on the east wall of the room and dated to AD 194.

²⁵ *Rep.* V, 201–37. In the *principia* only official and unofficial inscriptions relating to legionary units (*legio* III *Cyrenaica*, III *Gallica*, IV *Scythica* and X [*Fretensis?*] *Antoniniana*) were found, cf. *Rep.* V, 216. The *cohors* XX *Palmyrenorum* and other auxiliary units are not unambiguously mentioned in these inscriptions, and this has led scholars to speculate that the legionary *vexillationes* at Dura used the office space within the *principia*, while the auxiliary units used a converted office space at the back of the temple of Artemis Azzanathkona instead. Cf. Reeves (2004) 145.

²⁶ *Rep.* V, 161–2, no. 483.

²⁷ For Victory see *Rep.* V, 162–3, nos 485a–d (with 485c revised in *Rep.* VI, 487).

²⁸ The walls of room W 14 actually abound with graffiti. Besides those mentioned in the text, we have to remember the strong presence of symbols and invocations related to the sphere of magic and divination. See e.g. *Rep.* V, 158, no. 477 or *Rep.* VI, 482–3 and 496–9.

²⁹ For a complete description see *Rep.* V, 152–6, with inscriptions nos 473–5. *Ibid.* 153: ‘The god is clad in the uniform of Roman officer. His right hand is raised and grasps two small palm

is flying towards him, and beneath the goddess a man in a long-sleeved *chiton* is offering sacrifice in a *thymiaterion*.³⁰ To the left of the god is an eagle, with outspread wings and a laurel crown, and beneath it is a second scene of sacrifice, with another worshipper making an offering in a *thymiaterion*. He is wearing a long-sleeved *tunica* with fringe, high boots and a *paludamentum*, with a shoulder strap attached to the right side of the belt to support the sword.³¹ His right arm, stretched across the body, extends to just above the altar. Left of this sacrificant, a boy or servant carries a palm branch and a box of incense, and somewhat behind and to the left of both of them a horseman is depicted riding up to the scene of sacrifice. Apart from the meaning of the fresco as a whole,³² the god's dress together with the inscription written to the left of his head (NEIKATΩP, 'Conqueror'³³) and the presence of the Victory brings the representation in close relation to that of Sol Invictus, a divinity often used by emperors as their counterpart.³⁴ Other painted inscriptions in room W 14 refer to the emperors,³⁵ and expressions of imperial loyalty may also be recognised in the three architectural plaster blocks, found in room W 13, bearing the bust of a curly-haired young man whose facial features resemble those shown in the portraits of Antonine and Severan princes.³⁶

Of fundamental importance for our purposes is the so-called *Feriale Duranum*, also found in room W 13.³⁷ It is a papyrus³⁸ discovered

leaves and the top of a spear or long scepter fixed on the pedestal ... The left upper arm falls along the body, the forearm is bent across the waist and the hand holds a globe ... about the head is a crown made of a circle like a halo, through which are drawn five points and six small zigzag lines representing the rays of the sun.'

³⁰ For the name of the sacrificant, see *Rep.* V, 155, nos 470–1.

³¹ The clothing is the same as that of the tribune depicted in the fresco of Julius Terentius (see below); we are clearly faced with another (or the same?) officer offering sacrifice to the gods.

³² The historical meaning of this scene is controversial, but, at its most basic level, the artists meant to thank or invoke Yarhibol for military victories. See Reeves (2004) 148, n. 41.

³³ *Rep.* V, 155, no. 474.

³⁴ On the relationship between Sol and emperors see Berrens (2004). Cumont (1929) 106 and 254, n. 42 puts the god in relation with Aurelian, 'who found this new divinity in Palmyra and brought it into Rome'. See also the graffito of Yarhibol in *Rep.* IV, 210 and pl. XIX.2.

³⁵ Like the one in Latin placed close to the entrance on the east wall (*Rep.* V, 161, no. 482). Another one, again in the east wall, may refer to Septimius Severus and Caracalla, AD 198–209 (*Rep.* VI, 485–6, no. 808), while above the scene of sacrifice there is a graffito of an eagle with *taenia* in beak, and above it an inscription, perhaps *Salus Augusti* (*Rep.* VI, 493, no. 828).

³⁶ *Rep.* V, 166; Downey (1977) 125–6. For the identification as a youthful emperor, probably a Severan, see Reeves (2004) 147; compare Baharal (1996) 31–3 and 57–8.

³⁷ For a complete study on this papyrus see Fink, Hoey and Snyder (1940), Snyder (1940), Fink (1944), Fishwick (1988) and Reeves (2004). The *Feriale* was found beneath the mudbrick embankment along with the other documents. For a brief but exhaustive analysis of Roman army religion, see Helgeland (1978) with 1481–8 on the *Feriale* and its transcription.

³⁸ The sheet is 23 cm high and 120 cm long.

with eighty-four other documents – seventy-seven papyri and seven parchments – many of which related to the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*.³⁹ Although part of it is now lost, its function is clear: it was a list of religious festivities to be observed throughout the year. The papyrus was written in Latin and in capital letters; it did not contain strictly local festivities and was therefore considered an official document, perhaps in force throughout the empire. In this case it was edited as the basis for the religious festivals that *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* was required to observe, mainly through sacrifices or *supplicationes*. The Durene version dates back to the age of Severus Alexander⁴⁰ and includes several festivities in honour of the main gods of the Roman pantheon,⁴¹ of the regiment (such as the anniversaries of the legion or the annual sanctification of the *signa*), but also and above all in honour of all the emperors who by then had undergone a process of deification, taking the appellatives of *divi* (and *divae*, in the case of their wives). In fact, twenty-seven of the forty-one rituals listed are devoted to them.

B. Reeves has argued that it was not actually a military *Feriale*, but a civic one, written specifically for Dura. The analysis of the different theses about the function of the document is not the object of the present paper, but I want to underline two aspects that are useful to note. Firstly, I believe that the document includes some festivities which are strictly military, such as the anniversary of the legion or the annual sanctification of the *signa*,⁴² compulsory for the soldiers but not for the civilians. Even so, the civilians were not easily excluded from the rituals, but accepted at least as viewers.⁴³ Secondly, I agree with the fact that even if ‘the comprehensiveness of the imperial cult observances throughout the *Feriale Duranum* suggests the entries were taken from an official list derived by the imperial court. This is not to say ... that the document *in toto* was drawn up at the imperial center.’⁴⁴ In other words, the festivals could be chosen with regard to the addressees.

This papyrus allows us to recognise that the imperial cult was effectively officiated in Dura, and it also necessarily means that appropriate spaces for the related performances were arranged. Were they in the military area or in the whole city? If one accepts the hypothesis that civilians

³⁹ The *Feriale* and the other documents were found beneath the mudbrick embankment. On the cohort see Kennedy (1994) with previous bibliography.

⁴⁰ Probably written between AD 223 and 227. Cf. Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 191.

⁴¹ One should not forget that the gods mentioned were also the protectors of the imperial family.

⁴² Reeves considers these not to be the *Rosalia signorum*, in other words the sanctification of the *signa*, as in Hoey (1937) 16, and Fink, Hoey and Snyder (1940) 115, but the annual Rose Festival, the roses being one of the most important symbols for the city: Reeves (2004) 82–8.

⁴³ This hypothesis was also taken into account in Fink, Hoey and Snyder (1940) 28.

⁴⁴ Reeves (2004) 65.

could participate in some of the celebrations, it could also be assumed that some of these were performed in spaces created within the city (such as the forum), or that for specific occasions civilians could enter the military quarter. In both cases the interaction between the cultural components of the city is clearly evident. Moreover, if the festivals were chosen with regard to the addressees, they probably served to reinforce the sense of membership of the *cohors*, and the city itself, in the Roman empire, and the sense of loyalty to the emperors. The exact places where the rituals were performed remain, unfortunately, unknown. There must certainly have been a place where the soldiers carried out their daily actions, as those shown for instance in a papyrus dated to AD 239, which contains the morning records of the cohort: 'the first centurion announced the orders of the day; we will both do whatever may be ordered and be ready at every command; there are *standing watch at the standards of our lord the emperor*','⁴⁵ as well as a list of functionaries, such as the *signifer*, a *bucinator*, the *sacerdos* Themes and a *tessarius*.⁴⁶ These actions are most likely to have taken place in the *basilica* and/or in the courtyard of the *principia*.

Another space with the same function could be the first courtyard of the **palace of the Dux Ripae**,⁴⁷ which was designated in the *Reports* as court 58.⁴⁸ This hypothesis could be supported by the ideological importance of the place and size of the courtyard. It was also suggested that the only room adjacent to the porch, on the east side (the so-called room 59), was the *sacellum* in which the standards were kept.⁴⁹ In fact, inside it did not present facilities of any kind and was indeed empty and rather large. Moreover, there were two carefully constructed holes in the floor near the north-east wall and one near the south-west wall, which could have supported standards. We may assume that court 58 had a public function, given its width and its position in the general plan of the palace, probably for the assembly of a great number of people, but the attribution of room 59 to the imperial cult, due to the off-centred position of the holes and the general lack of evidence, is rather speculative.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Translation in Kaizer (2006) 155. My italics.

⁴⁶ Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) no. 89 and Fink (1971) no. 50.

⁴⁷ For a complete description of the palace see *Rep.* IX.3, 1–96. This hypothesis is stressed also in Perkins (1973) 27–8. In contrast, some scholars nowadays believe that this hypothesis is very risky, since the main function of the building was residential (S. James, pers. comm.).

⁴⁸ *Rep.* IX.3, 72, esp. n. 8; Perkins (1973) 27–8. It is described as a large peristyle, probably used as a collection point for troops and a stage for military ceremonies.

⁴⁹ *Rep.* IX.3, 71–3, esp. 72 with n. 10. From this room came two inscriptions (*Rep.* IX.3, 55, nos 960–1), one of which mentioning the first three lines of the *Aeneid*.

⁵⁰ One should think of the discovery in the south corner of the portico of court 1 of four fragments of a plaster dipinto. They were interpreted as a dedication, again to Caracalla. Due

A new hypothesis relates to the eastern part of the city. Firstly, one ought to remember the location of the temple commonly known as the ‘**military temple**’ or the ‘**temple of the Roman archers**’, dedicated to an unknown god by the *cohors II Ulpia Equitata Civites Romani Sagittarii*⁵¹ and placed in Block A1 [PLATE XXXVII].⁵² The temple was built in Roman style, with a distyle *in antis* porch and a single *cella*.⁵³ It is the only temple built in this way in Dura-Europos and, according to the studies of S. James,⁵⁴ it would have been placed at the end of an open area devoted to military exercises, also mentioned in the papyri,⁵⁵ in the shadow of the citadel.⁵⁶ If this hypothesis is correct, it would be possible that this area actually served at least for the daily standing watch at the standards of the emperors.

S. James has emphasised also the possible symbolic significance of a **gate** or **arch**, found during the 2005 campaign and located on the 10th street between the *principia* and the baths,⁵⁷ as celebrating a victory or imperial visit.⁵⁸ This arch could be the *groma* mentioned in the papyri,⁵⁹ although another location for the latter could be the junction between H St/8th St, where four important axes come together.⁶⁰

Other events related to imperial celebrations could take place within the **amphitheatre**, and other dedications could be made in the *thermae*. We must take account of these two buildings together because both are placed in Block F3, and the former was created after the abandonment and partial demolition of the latter.⁶¹ Unfortunately the archaeological evidence has not yielded much data, apart from a painting of the goddess Victoria in the

to its strange position, it is unlikely that this dipinto should be regarded as the dedication of the building, and it is more probable that it was a private or semi-official dedication to the reigning emperor. Cf. *Rep.* IX.3, 27–30, no. 944.

⁵¹ Only an inscribed altar was found, recording the erection of a temple *cum statua*: *Rep.* II, 16–17; *ibid.*, 83–6.

⁵² The cohort is probably the same as the one whose decurion erected an altar to Commodus in the Palmyra gate (see below). See also Reeves (2004) 167–8.

⁵³ See also Downey (1988a) 124.

⁵⁴ James (2004), *id.* (2007) and *id.*, pers. comm.

⁵⁵ See e.g. the one taken into account above for the *principia*, in Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) no. 89 and Fink (1971) no. 50. The same, suggestive, hypothesis is quoted also in Reeves (2004) 168.

⁵⁶ For a complete discussion see below. On the *porta aquaria*, see *P. Dura* 107 and 110, and Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 378 and 383.

⁵⁷ James (2007) 33–6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 36.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* On the ancient sources mentioning the *groma*, see *ibid.* 46, n. 33, and cf. *ibid.* nn. 34–6.

⁶⁰ Namely the road coming from the so-called River gate, H St, 8th St and the northern continuation on H St going to the area of the Palace of the *Dux Ripae*. Cf. *ibid.* 45–6.

⁶¹ For a complete description of the *thermae*, see *Rep.* VI, 49–67; for the amphitheatre see *Rep.* VI, 68–83.

bath⁶² and, more importantly, a dedication to Caracalla and Julia Domna (as *mater castrorum*) found near the entrance door C of the amphitheatre, of which it probably was the lintel.⁶³

In this area of the city we also find the presence of the emperor in sanctuaries which were not directly connected with military duties, but linked to the personal cults of the soldiers: the so-called temple 'of the Palmyrene gods' and the mithraeum, both placed in the north-western corner of the city (and of the camp). The **temple of the Palmyrene gods**, dedicated to Alexander Severus by the XX Palmyrene cohort⁶⁴ (though of course much older), had a large surface of walls decorated with frescoes, whose main theme was the sacrifice to the gods of the temple. For example on the south wall of the naos the sacrifice of Konon was depicted, inside a small chapel was the sacrifice of Otes, and another sacrifice was depicted on the south wall of the pronaos, inside a building with tortile columns.⁶⁵ Worthy of attention is the panel of the north wall of the pronaos that represents the sacrifice of Julius Terentius, the Roman tribune of the main garrison of Dura, the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, in charge around 239 AD [PLATE II]. The common description of the scene is that Terentius is making an offering, followed by his *cohors*, to three deities wearing military dress and to the personifications of the Tychai of Dura and Palmyra.⁶⁶

Terentius occupies almost the central position of the painting. His body has a frontal position although his feet are turned to his right, toward the *thymiaterion* onto which he is dropping some incense. He is wearing a short tunic with long sleeves, cloak and boots, has short hair and is bearded. On his left are two ranks of soldiers who attend the sacrifice, with clothes and haircuts very similar to those of their tribune;⁶⁷ on his right we find a carrier of the *vexillum* and the objects of worship. The two Tychai follow typical Hellenistic iconography based on the Tyche of Antioch, while the three gods in the upper register, depicted above three round bases, are characterised by their military dress: armour over a short tunic, cloak and high boots. Each holds a rod in his hand, and a shield is placed on the right

⁶² *Rep.* VI, 63–7.

⁶³ *Rep.* VI, 77–83, no. 630.

⁶⁴ Cumont (1926) 357–8, no. 3.

⁶⁵ In some paintings adoring people are represented larger than life and dressed in clothes not strictly concerning one person, but presenting a mixture of Greek and Asian elements, a detail that further denotes the multicultural character of the city. Also Zeus-Bel, traditionally considered to have been the main deity of the temple, was believed to have been depicted in Parthian dress. For a complete description, see Perkins (1973) 36–47.

⁶⁶ Cumont (1926) 89–114; Perkins (1973) 43–5.

⁶⁷ Compare also with the officer on the drawing from room W 14 in the temple of Artemis Azzanathkona (see above).

of the three. These three gods were initially identified, on an iconographic basis, with Yarhibol, Aglibol and Malakbel, and for this reason the temple was first called that 'of the Palmyrene gods'.⁶⁸ The iconographic details differ, however, from the typical representation of these three gods, and it was suggested by T. Pekáry that they did not show traditional deities, but rather statues of three Roman emperors.⁶⁹ In this way the sacrifice of Julius Terentius could be interpreted as a sacrifice related to the imperial cult.⁷⁰ Although it is almost certain that the three gods are not to be identified with emperors,⁷¹ the strong military component in the composition, both in the considerable attendance of soldiers and in the dress code of the gods, certainly recalled the presence of Rome in the city.

It is interesting to note that, if the *thymiatherion* is taken as the centre of the composition, the *vexillarius* is placed not amongst the group of worshippers but with those worshipped.⁷² The common explanation for the presence of the *vexillarius* on the right of Terentius and the *thymiatherion* is that given by Perkins: 'The standard-bearer has been pushed close against the Fortune of Dura, and *the edge of the vexillum touches the shield of one of the military gods, although there is room to move his figure to the right*; this implies that the right side of the painting was made first and the deities fitted in as well as possible. There is little visual connection between the human and divine sides of the panel. The gestures of Terentius and the priest point in the direction of the deities as well as the altar, but are blocked by the *strong vertical of the signifer and the standard*.'⁷³ In contrast, I would rather suggest that the *vexillum* was indeed depicted as one of the objects of cult, or at least that it symbolised that the other cults were officiated under the supervision and consent of Rome, and that the *vexillarius* is there because the *vexillum* he holds has to be. The position of the *vexillum*, symbol of belonging to the Roman army, in that half of the fresco dedicated to the gods, together with the representation of the strong presence of the

⁶⁸ *Rep.* II, 11–2 and 67–9.

⁶⁹ Pekáry (1986). In particular he proposed that we should interpret the three figures as Pupienus, Balbinus and Gordianus III, the former two as *Augusti*, the latter one as *Caesar*. Pekáry underlines the fact that the scene of sacrifice seems to be an official occasion; if it was for local deities it would take place in a more private frame. He also argues (at 91) that in the *Feriale Duranum* the Palmyrene festivities are not taken into account, while great emphasis is given to the Roman ones, especially those for the emperors.

⁷⁰ Elsner (2001) 276–8 with previous bibliography.

⁷¹ Stoll (2001) 367–79. Palmyrene soldiers living in Dura-Europos honoured both the ancestral gods of their native country and the Roman deities, including the emperors. See also Kaizer (2006) 152.

⁷² It should also be noted that he is not placed on the wooden rise together with the other soldiers, but on his own.

⁷³ Perkins (1973) 45 (my italics).

army and the location of the same temple inside the military area, make evident the connection of the building to imperial ideology.

In the **mithraeum** there is no pictorial relation between the emperor and the other gods of the temple, but an epigraphic one instead. In fact three inscriptions of monumental character were found: two of them were dedicated to Mithra and placed on the two cult reliefs of the god himself,⁷⁴ the third was dedicated to the health of Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta⁷⁵ and placed above the lintel of the entrance door of the sanctuary. This third inscription, written in Latin and dated between AD 209 and 211, refers to the restoration and change of function of the temple in its second phase as the sanctuary of the legionary *vexillationes*.⁷⁶ The presence of these contemporary dedicatory inscriptions in the same place is fundamental because they confirm again how it was fairly normal for the soldiers to draw local gods and the *divi* emperors closer to one another, binding them in close cultural and cultic relationships. Support also comes from another inscription, painted in fine black letters on the first column of the middle mithraeum and dedicated to the Victory of the Lords the Emperors.⁷⁷

As we have seen, the military area was totally permeated by the presence of imperial power, expressed in different visual forms not only in the proper military buildings, but also in some temples. The presence of the emperor was periodically re-marked by military duties, *in primis* the sanctifications and the daily standing watch at the standards. The same nature of the buildings and their separation from the rest of the city served to increase the soldiers' sense of cultural belonging to the empire, while simultaneously making this clear to the civilians. It is easy to suppose that in this area the first promoter of building activity and of imperial representation was the same *exercitus*, in two different ways. With regard to the monuments erected for military purposes, the highest commanders in charge will certainly have played an important role in their construction, in addition to exercising control over, and promoting, the above-mentioned events, such as the sanctification of the *signa* and of the anniversaries of the emperors, which were held in the same buildings and along the very streets that connected them. In the temple 'of the Palmyrene gods' and in the mithraeum something different can be observed. Here, together with the commanders, the soldiers were probably not only the addressees, but also the promoters. The fresco of Julius Terentius shows the soldiers as actors in the sacrifice,

⁷⁴ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 83–4, no. 845 in Palmyrenean and no. 846 in Greek.

⁷⁵ With the name of Geta carefully erased in AD 212, after his murder.

⁷⁶ On the phases see *Rep.* VII–VIII, 62–82.

⁷⁷ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 87, no. 848.

and the Latin inscription in the mithraeum, which was a temple reserved for the cult of the soldiers, also seems to reveal a voluntary tie between the deities venerated.

Analysis of the Evidence: The Civic Area

In the civic centre the evidence relating to imperial representation is less noticeable than in the military area. The spaces were probably chosen with a different intention, namely to emphasise the fact that the inhabitants of Dura could live and perform their cults thanks to the imperial power. This was done mostly by integrating the imperial deities in the already variegated pantheon of the city, as was also partly the case in the military quarter. The main data come from temple buildings, namely the temple of Artemis, the temple of the Gadde and the Tycheion in the Palmyra gate.

The local **shrine of Artemis** reveals close ties with the glorification of imperial ideology, and it is possible that an association of the goddess with Julia Domna can be seen. From the temple comes a dedication by the *boulè* to Julia Domna, which was probably on a statue base,⁷⁸ and a column that could have served as the base for a statue of Lucius Verus, set up by an *epistates* near the door of the *cella* of the sanctuary,⁷⁹ probably along with a dedication by the *strategos* Seleukos.⁸⁰ These connections are fundamental because they juxtapose the imperial family with the founders of the city and with one of its main deities.⁸¹ Inside the shrine there was a room known as the ‘salle à gradins,’ thought to be the *bouleuterion* of Dura.⁸² It actually ought to be defined as a multifunctional hall,⁸³ in which not only the assembly’s meetings took place, but also activities related to the cult of Artemis and perhaps for the emperors and their families (Julia Domna

⁷⁸ *Rep.* III, 51–2, no. D149. The inscription was written in Greek and was discovered in the main court of the temple, near the staircase.

⁷⁹ Cumont (1926) 173, no. 53.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* no. 52.

⁸¹ A parchment dated AD 180 lists four men. Kaizer (2007) 454: ‘During that year they occupied the priesthoods of, respectively, Zeus (under the name of Zeus *Olympios*, the main god for the Seleucids), Apollo (a patron deity for them), the *Progonoi* or ancestors (probably of some Seleucid kings) and Seleucus Nicator (the founder of the dynasty).’ See Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) no. 25. The deification of Seleucus Nicator in relation to the Gad of Dura, represented as Zeus *Olympios*, patron of the Seleucid dynasty, can be also seen in the relief found in the naos (3) of the temple of the Gadde. Here, the Gad is being crowned by the deified founder of the city, Seleucus himself: Downey (1977) 14–17. For a possible dedication to Seleucus Nicator, see also *Rep.* III, 54–5, no. D151.

⁸² See also the contribution to this volume by L. Gregoratti.

⁸³ Leriche (1999) esp. 732.

in primis) who were sharing the sanctuary.⁸⁴ Moreover in *oikos* F a small plaster relief of Nike, apparently eastern in style, was found together with the statue of Artemis, while in room E a statuette of Fortuna of the western type was found. These connections between local and Graeco-Roman deities confirm the characteristic of religious juxtaposition in the temples of Dura.⁸⁵

In the **temple of the Gadde** a pedestal was discovered, cut into the face of the plinth placed in the centre of the east wall of Colonnade 10, with the dedication of a statue by soldiers of the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* to an unknown deity.⁸⁶ F. Brown suggested that this could have belonged to a sculptural group which represented various components of the imperial family, like Septimius Severus and his sons or Caracalla and Geta,⁸⁷ and the group could have been the worship *agalma* for the imperial cult, since the Palmyrene gods were already subject of other forms of worship in the temple.⁸⁸ The hypothesis of the active presence of the imperial cult within the city is fairly appealing, but even without its existence in the civic centre there is confirmation, in the form of the dedicatory inscription, of the usual interaction between soldiers and civilians, as long as the former were free to set up statues to their gods in the temples of the latter.

A particular case is presented by the **Palmyra gate**, which was the main gate into the city [PLATE XXXVIII].⁸⁹ It comprised two towers and between them a passage controlled by three doors. These doors, placed one behind the other, became broader as one entered from the outside towards the town, hence contributing to the physical idea of the importance of entering into the city.⁹⁰ Inside the gate a small shrine for Tyche was established. It is likely that the shrine was located within room D, which was the roofed inner court of the passageway.⁹¹ Three altars were found here,⁹² one of them dedicated to the emperor Commodus Felix and his Victory.⁹³ In the same

⁸⁴ The possible use of the place for celebration of sacred ceremonies was also recognised by Cumont (1926) 187–8. Cf. Nielsen (2002) for the definition of ‘cultic theatres’, and esp. 241–6 for the case of Dura-Europos.

⁸⁵ See Downey (1977) 171. On the phenomenon of *synnaoi theoi*, see the fundamental works of Nock (1930) and Price (1984).

⁸⁶ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 277, no. 906. It ought to be remembered that a large amount of sculpture has disappeared from this temple.

⁸⁷ The base is large enough to have hosted two or three statues.

⁸⁸ *Rep.* VII–VIII, 250–2 and 277, no. 906; Pollard (1996) 223.

⁸⁹ It measures 22.35 × 23.18 m, forming an almost perfect square. *Rep.* I, 11. See also *Rep.* II, 6–8.

⁹⁰ The first one is 2.80 m wide, the second one is 3.48 m and the last one is 3.62 m.

⁹¹ See below for the hypothesis of Rostovtzeff and Baur about the *Tycheion* in Room H.

⁹² *Rep.* I, 16, 19–21 and 42–7, and pl. II.2.

⁹³ *Rep.* I, 42–4, no. 1. The epithet Felix shows that the inscription was incised after AD 185. The name of the emperor has not been erased as in most of his inscriptions (*Rep.* I, 43). For a

room a small bust in chalky stone with the inscription *KOMOΔOΣ* was also found. It could either be a rough attempt at making an imperial bust for dedication, or just a funerary bust of a soldier named Komodos:⁹⁴ even if the matter cannot be solved, the vicinity of two dedications to Commodus is noteworthy.⁹⁵ The other altars were dedicated to the Gad of Dura⁹⁶ and to Nemesis.⁹⁷

Several other inscriptions with dedications to the Tyche of Dura, Fortuna, Victoria and Nemesis were found inside the gate.⁹⁸ An altar with the graffito of a *vexillum* on the anterior face was also found, while on the right face there was a winged Victory, flying and holding in both hands a large palm, and on the left a person, probably a soldier, holding a bird perched upon a circle.⁹⁹ A painted wooden panel representing Victory was found in room H,¹⁰⁰ and for this reason M. Rostovtzeff and P. Baur suggested that the *Tycheion* would have been located here, while also hypothesising that the cult image was the bust of an emperor or empress.¹⁰¹ Even if this last argument is fairly weak, it is evident from the whole description of the gate that images of the imperial family were placed in the relevant buildings of the city. The Palmyra gate was the main gate to the city, and stressing the importance of, and the town's adherence to, Rome here at the gate, as a mirror and presentation of the city itself, was equally fundamental.

One should not forget one final space related to the glorification of the emperors. From one mile outside Dura, on the road to Palmyra, come

complete analysis of the inscription, with previous bibliography, see Speidel (1993). At 110, he argued that the inscription was set up on 17 March AD 193, on the anniversary of the emperor's accession.

⁹⁴ *Rep.* I, 21 and 48–9. See also Speidel (1993) 112, n. 33: here the bust is interpreted only as the emperor Commodus.

⁹⁵ The excavators also found a marble relief, showing a naked man holding a club, and an up-reaching lion. The relief has been interpreted as a colossal statue of Commodus-Hercules, resembling the one that stood near the Colosseum. This hypothesis is challenged in Downey (1969).

⁹⁶ *Rep.* I, 45 and 61–2.

⁹⁷ *Rep.* I, 19, 45 and 62–8. On Nemesis, see Hornum (1993).

⁹⁸ See e.g. the ones on the south wall: *Rep.* I, 41, C 3, and 47–8, no. 2.

⁹⁹ Could it be the eagle of the Romans? *Rep.* I, 20, 68–71 and pls IV.2 and V.

¹⁰⁰ They also add that the inner court of the gate (room D) would be dedicated at least to the cult of Victory and Nemesis (*Rep.* II, 181). At *ibid.* 155, J. Johnson writes: 'It was a disappointment of last season that the excavations did not surely prove the location of this shrine. The frescoes of the second court show that in the later period at least this court was roofed, and the location of the altars to the Genius of Dura and the Gad make it entirely possible that the seat of the cult was in the passage itself ... It is unlikely that the cult was located in the dark, ill-lit towers.'

¹⁰¹ *Rep.* II, 181–93, esp. 181–3.

sixteen fragments of a monumental inscription dedicated to Trajan and mentioning the *legio* III *Cyrenaica*.¹⁰²

Almost all of the evidence is related to public buildings, since these are the main ones to have been excavated and studied. Looking for evidence also in the private sphere, such as in the houses of the civic centre, hardly leads to any results. The only possible evidence is a relief of Hercules's fight against the lion, which was found in a **house** 'abutting on the west wall of the so-called Interior Redoubt'.¹⁰³ The shape of the relief and its position seem to indicate that it was a household shrine, and P. Baur suggested a comparison between the worship of Hercules and Commodus, as in the well-known representation of Hercules Augustus as *comes* and *conservator* of the empire.¹⁰⁴ His hypothesis of a private shrine for the emperor is charming, but unfortunately not very reliable.¹⁰⁵

It is clear that the evidence from the civic centre is notably less than that from the military area, the shared intent of glorifying the emperors notwithstanding. The variation is due to the different addressees of the message. While the promoters were the same governors and *exercitus*, the recipients were the civilians and the people, mostly merchants, who came to Dura for various purposes. The use of Greek, in contrast to that of Latin in the military sphere, is surely worthy of note,¹⁰⁶ together with the fact that the figures of Rome and the emperors were located in spaces which functioned as focal points within the city: the temple of Artemis was probably home to the *bouleuterion* of Dura, while the Palmyra gate was the main entrance to the city itself. In the civic centre, therefore, the locations for the representations were chosen with the intent of making the emperors and Roman *virtutes* part of the city itself, and also of trying to associate the emperors with the local deities, providing continuity with the cults of the city itself.

¹⁰² *Rep.* IV, 56–68, with the addenda in *Rep.* VI, 480–2. On the relationship between Dura and Trajan, see also Rostovtzeff (1938b). On the visit of Trajan to Dura-Europos, see Halfmann (1986) 185. Cf. Bowersock (1983) 84–5 for a possible association with the triumphal arch in Petra dedicated to Trajan.

¹⁰³ *Rep.* I, 75.

¹⁰⁴ *Rep.* I, 77. There are different statues in the empire representing Lucius Commodus Hercules, and the link is given also in legends on coins, *Herculi Commodo Aug.* P. Baur, in *Rep.* I, 77, n. 2, remarks also that 'on a rare coin of Commodus, Hercules stands in the same pose as on the relief found at Dura, and holds the club in his right hand, but the lion's skin, instead of the lion, fills the space at his left'. On the relationship between Commodus and Hercules, see Hekster (2002) esp. 117–29, with previous bibliography.

¹⁰⁵ To quote Baur again, at *Rep.* I, 77: 'Would it then, with all this evidence in mind, be too bold to see in the relief from Dura Hercules Commodianus worshiped in the home of an admirer of that emperor as his patron saint?'

¹⁰⁶ In general, cf. Kaizer (2009a).

Types of Evidence

We have mainly epigraphic and written sources to rely on. At least one of them, the *Feriale Duranum*, is unique and allows us, together with other documents found in the same military area,¹⁰⁷ to understand better how the imperial cult was officiated by the soldiers in the city. An important reflection as regards the language used is that almost all of the evidence is in Latin. This is particularly true for the military area, while in the civic area we find some Greek inscriptions, like the dedications of the statues in the temple of Artemis or the chalky bust of Komodos. Latin necessarily implies there were Roman elements in the power sphere: the language must surely be considered as a tool expressing the imperial presence in the city's life.

The presence of visual evidence is fairly unique, in particular in the case of the fresco of Julius Terentius, which helps us to gain a greater understanding of the possible relationship between the army, local cults, military cults and locals. The sculptural evidence is scarcer and less reliable. None of the imperial portraits mentioned are securely identified, and there are only a few of them: the bust of a curly-haired young man (a portrait of an Antonine or Severan prince?) in the temple of Artemis Azzanathkona, and the small bust in chalky stone with the inscription *Komodos* at the Palmyra gate. To these we could add the relief of Hercules's fight against the lion found in a house and the statuette of Fortuna of western type in the temple of Artemis. None were made in marble, but rather all are in plaster and chalk.

Another exceptional piece of information is a particular find that cannot actually be connected with a specific space. Even so, it can provide us with a better perspective in our general understanding of the Durenes' feelings towards Rome and their perception of being part of the empire. In street G2 (in the area of the market) a plaster mould was found.¹⁰⁸ The medalion made with it would be just 0.12 m in diameter and depicts the busts of a man and of a woman, facing the head of a small child in the centre.¹⁰⁹ The man seems to wear a laurel wreath on his head and a toga, while the woman is depicted with the band which fixes the hair in the fashion found in coins of Otacilia and Herennia Etruscilla. On the same side was written Ε]ΙΣ ΑΙΩΝΑ ΤΟ ΚΡΑΤΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΚΥΡΙΩΝ and beneath S C: the inscription

¹⁰⁷ Such as the above-mentioned document Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) no. 89; Fink (1971) no. 50.

¹⁰⁸ *Rep.* V, 88–9, no. 412.

¹⁰⁹ The heads of the man and the woman are in profile, while the child is fully frontal.

clearly expresses a common wish for the eternal rule of the emperors, probably Otacilia, Philip and their son.¹¹⁰ This little object, together with all of the other evidence analysed, underlines once again the aim to make the emperors' presence felt in daily life.¹¹¹

Imperial Representation as Part of the Religious Life of Dura

The above occurrences all interact with the religious sphere, and this is not by chance. Religion in Dura was experienced at two different levels: there was a public religion to respect, but more private cults were also practised, some of them with strong military associations (e.g. of Mithras or Jupiter Dolichenus), followed by dedications and private beliefs. The best evidence regarding the honours to the emperors in the state religion is certainly the *Feriale Duranum*, whose listed celebrations were those of the imperial cult, as well as traditional Roman and Italian festivals, like the Saturnalia and Vestalia. Here, the soldiers found a common Roman military identity. These celebrations were held in spaces that served as a programmatic reminder, even at what was a significant distance from Rome, of the power and strength of the emperor and how, thanks to him, the empire could grow and be enriched. As has been argued above, these spaces could be the *principia*, but also the open space in front of the military temple, or, less likely, the first courtyard of the palace of the *Dux Ripae*. It is also for this reason that the creation of a military quarter was necessary, together with the project of a structured sequence of spaces connected inside a common, entirely Roman, framework. The mere construction of such buildings surely instilled a deep sense of gratitude to the emperor in the soldiers.

A visual comparison with the *Feriale* can be seen in the fresco of the sacrifice of Julius Terentius,¹¹² although the latter could also represent an episode related to the cultic practices that soldiers performed while organised in *corporationes*. In fact, various cults of soldiers, single or in corporations, are known, showing devotion to deities such as Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus.¹¹³ Here too the presence of the emperor was stressed through dedicatory inscriptions, paintings, sculptures and

¹¹⁰ For a complete discussion see *Rep.* VI, 89–90. It was suggested that this mould was made in honour of the celebration of 1001 years of Rome in AD 248, even if also an earlier date is accepted.

¹¹¹ On the moulds related to imperial representations, see Boon (1958) and especially Alföldi (1938).

¹¹² Pekáry (1986) 91–3.

¹¹³ We also find cases of Roman officials who paid tribute to the local deities, as Gemellus, the legate of Augustus in Dura, did. He dedicated an altar in the temple of Atagartis (Cumont

so on, which could be observed and perhaps shared with civilians. Of course the *divi* and *divae*, the deified emperors and empresses, did not replace the traditional gods. It could rather be suggested that the strategy was aimed at the inclusion of the imperial family within the panorama of the local deities and at the assimilation and unification of their identities to those of the city's gods, perhaps honouring them both in the same temples and continuing the religious policy that the Seleucid kings had already adopted in the city.¹¹⁴

The Spaces of Imperial Representation as Pointers of Urban Paths

It has been shown that there are clearly different ways of understanding and using the spaces both in the military and the civic areas. In the former, some edifices were built *ad hoc* which clearly resembled the majesty of the emperors. Moreover the whole northern part of the city was modified in order to be as Roman as possible: the sequence of the buildings reflects a project of structuring a sequence of spaces connected inside a common, entirely Roman, framework. The creation of the complex of the *principia* also included the temple of Artemis Azzanathkona, the palace of the *Dux Ripae*, and the provision of facilities such as baths and an amphitheatre for the camp. The temple structures were created *ex novo* or, when maintained, gained a specifically military mark, and the emperor is found in dedications and/or in paintings. In the civic area, on the contrary, the emperors only 'entered' some key buildings: the main gate, the temple of the Gadde and the temple of Artemis. It is fairly unusual that there is no evidence from the area of the agora.

These differences notwithstanding, a common urban intent can be found in the placement of the representations: the study of the evidence reveals that the spaces where data were found are dispersed along the main streets and follow some sort of route. Arrival at the city was emphasised by the main gate: from the very entrance, the relationship between the

(1926) 409, no. 51) and one in the temple of Artemis, probably as an official representative of Rome (*Rep.* III, 43–5, no. D145). See also Downey (1977) 188.

¹¹⁴ Just some examples: the temple for Apalados *Theos* (i.e. of Aphlad), built in the south-west zone of the city in honour of Seleukos, *strategos* of the city (*Rep.* V, 113–6, no. 418); the above-mentioned inscription mentioning the *strategos* Seleukos on the *naos* door of the temple of Artemis (Cumont (1926) 173, no. 52); the representation of Seleucus as Gad of Dura; the association of Seleucus Nikator with Apollo.

city and Rome was stressed.¹¹⁵ In the civic centre the two temples that presented a connection with the imperial ideology (those of Artemis and of the Gadde) are close to the roads that led to the agora and the military quarter. The other evidence is located in the military area, with the paths following those emphasised in the studies of S. James on the main routes for official traffic within the city, which actually form the most interesting data brought to light by this study.¹¹⁶

We find a main route which enters from the Palmyra gate (the alleged *porta praetoriana*), turns left at the intersection between the Main Street and the H Street, leaves the agora on the left, and reaches the military area at the junction between H Street and 8th Street, where the intersection may have been emphasised by the presence of the *groma* or of a gate or arch. Another route could have entered from the River gate (*porta aquaria?*), arriving at the same junction and leaving on the right the citadel, the open area in front of the military temple and the military temple itself. Once here and going north, one can head towards the palace of the *Dux Ripae* and the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus. More interesting is its western part: the same 8th Street leads to the amphitheatre and the baths, and, through two different crossroads, to the *principia* and to the temples of Mithras and of the Palmyrene gods. Finally, another important route links the temple 'of the Palmyrene gods' to the Main Street, through B Street, confirmed by the gate on the southern military wall, which allows one to walk the length of the street without interruption between military and civic areas.

These considerations together lead to the conclusion that those who decided the placement of the buildings and their association with the emperors were clearly aware of stressing the importance of the 'Lord Emperors', and of providing the passer-by with a strong visual impression of the extent of Rome's power. They were, as far as I am concerned, in most cases the leading citizens of Dura, generally military representatives of Rome and of the emperor in the city itself, and were aware of the importance of placing dedications to emperors at specific key points. Besides this, we are faced with dedications made by individuals or by *corporationes*, which reveal how the imperial homage was also felt to form part of

¹¹⁵ The relationship between Rome and Dura was actually also stressed before the entrance to the city, thanks to the Arch of Trajan. In addition to the accompanying inscription (*Rep. IV*, 56–65), it was built in such a way that the main arch framed the view of the Palmyra gate.

¹¹⁶ It was only when the first version of this paper had been written that I learned about the latest results of the still ongoing project of S. James. Cf. James (2007) 43–6. For further illustration, see PLATES XXXIX–XLII.

personal cultic life and a voluntary expression of Roman identity. By using these two different strategies, of integration (for example by enriching the city's temples with inscriptions and paintings) and of maintaining Roman features, the imperial power was embodied in spaces which permitted the creation of a common feeling amongst the Durenes: not only soldiers, but also civilians were confronted with what formed a constant element in the city of Dura-Europos.

But those who reproach me with laziness and mistakes should know that our ancestors were men and the same things happened to them that happen to us. In fact, if they composed inscriptions in a polished, elegant, and accurate way, they gave them to be engraved in marble or bronze to workers who were ignorant of letters and made mistakes, and besides, their mistakes either were not very much noted or the erasure could not easily be made without damage to the stone.¹

The text above is taken from a treatise preserved in a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century manuscript, composed by a Humanist scribe, Fra Giocondo da Verona. With his comment, Fra Giocondo shows that he too was aware of, what seem to the modern eye, the weaknesses of so many Roman inscriptions. They are often very poorly laid out and have apparently obvious ‘errors’ in the text. The phenomenon is today best explained by reference to the disjunction between the commissioner (for want of a better word) of the inscribed piece and the workman (or workmen) who carried it out. This idea, not new even in his day, was taken up and argued in earnest by the French palaeographer Jean Mallon.² The separation, of the craftsman (or craftsmen) concerned from the composer of the text *per se*, was an important element in much of Mallon’s thought.³

Mallon argued for the influence, the interference even, of a middle man, whom he called *ordinator*, to help explain the sometimes obvious disjunction between the assumed original intention of the commissioner and the actual text on the finished cut stone. He surmised that there were, in the construction and carving of a given Roman inscription, commonly three successive stages, each of which corresponded to a specific operation. Firstly, there was the draft text, probably handwritten by whoever was responsible for it; secondly, the sketching out by the *ordinator* on the intended surface (with chalk, say, or a hard point) of the underlying framework for the formal cut

¹ Ciapponi (1979) 24, citing text from Giocondo da Verona’s dedicatory letter to Lorenzo the Magnificent, translated from the Latin in M.S. Verona, Bib. Capit. CCLXX (241) fol. 209.

² Mallon (1952) 58, para. 106, 186 discussing pl. XXXI.1, and also id. (1957). Further literature on this point probably began with Gordon and Gordon (1957) 70ff. See also Susini (1973); Saastamoinen (2008), nn. 3–5 with further bibliography; Grasby (2009) 8–10.

³ Much of Mallon’s work is usefully republished in Mallon (1982).

letters; and thirdly, the letter carving itself, here using the framework, the *ordinatio*, as a guide.⁴

Mallon's suggestion that there was a craftsman known as the *ordinator*, responsible for setting out the underlying framework of an inscription, was based upon the fortuitous survival of an advertisement for a letter-carving workshop in Sicily, the Latin text of which read: *tituli heic ordinantur et sculpuntur* (CIL X, 7296).⁵

This text (which had been noted earlier by Hübner) was interpreted by both Hübner and Mallon as referring to, and therefore separating, the final two stages of the creation of the inscription one from the other.⁶ While the first stage, the casually written draft, was implicit in the whole concept, the 'ordination', the second stage, was distinct from the carving itself, the third stage.⁷ This would mean that the commissioner (or indeed the author) of a given epigraphic text would usually have seen his text, in its carved and finished form, only at two stages removed from his initial conception.⁸

The recent analytical work of Richard Grasby has now been convincingly confirmed and demonstrated that an *ordinator*, someone who set out an underlying framework for the later carving of an inscription, was indeed often involved in the creation of a high-grade inscription.⁹ Grasby has presented evidence to show that, from the earlier empire at least and

⁴ Sometimes, at least, letters would afterwards be painted. There is no guarantee, however, that this always took place. *Rep.* VII–VIII, 85, no. 847 with pl. XLIX.1 shows an example of some finely cut lettering (in two styles of majuscules) which had probably been painted after cutting. At Dura-Europos, texts in painted letters are possibly more ubiquitous among the discoveries than are the carved inscriptions, and many inscriptions had also once been painted. Such is a finely cut dedication left by two legions in the mithraeum which has underneath it a blank frame inside which were probably once painted letters, now disappeared (*Rep.* V, 221, no. 557, pl. XXIX.1. Lettering that was simply painted, but never cut, was probably also common. I take up this argument in the text in hand, but would point the reader also to *Rep.* IX.1, 176, no. 939 with pl. XXI, a Greek text of which the last lines are painted while the rest has been cut.

⁵ 'Inscriptions "designed/laid out" and cut here'. See Mallon (1952) 57. The word *ordinatio* is a back formation he derived from this text. But see also some further evidence for the term *ordinatio* in Lassus (1959). Susini (1973) 32 states his opinion that *ordinatio* lies behind 90 per cent of inscriptions. Here he counters other opposed views.

⁶ Hübner (1885) xxix–xxx and xxxv–xxvi. See also Gordon and Gordon (1957) 80, and Susini (1973) 9–13, with further bibliography.

⁷ Thus Mallon isolated as the key cause of the errors that he, perhaps fortuitously, found in several generally second-grade finished inscriptions, the fact that the *ordinator* misread the commissioner's handwritten draft text. This initial misreading could also then be compounded by further misreading on the part of the letter carver.

⁸ He could have chosen it from a selection in a stonemason's manual. On this idea see Le Blant (1859), Cagnat (1889) and Saastamoinen (2008).

⁹ Grasby (2009) contains details of earlier publications and also presents some revisions to these.

in the construction of formal *scriptura monumentalis*, an *ordinator* might follow a set of geometric rules. He was equipped with compass, dividers, either a hard point or chalk (or charcoal), and a 'simple grid template' into which an alphabet of letters in the given style had been pre-fitted. He used, customarily, a broad-edged paintbrush.¹⁰ This tool, when held at a consistent angle, gave, as a natural effect of its proper use, the necessary dimensions and the characteristic shading to the letter forms.¹¹ The secondary work of the carver was then simply to follow the outline of the brushstrokes and to chisel along these, creating a 'V' cut.¹²

Thus far, therefore, the case for the *ordinator* is strong.¹³ The situation is undoubtedly more complicated, however, than has so far been implied. As Grasby himself pointed out, a clear separation between the craftsmen involved would not always have existed, and many inscriptions are, in fact, most likely to be the work of a single man.¹⁴ Alternatively, a worker on his own might begin to inscribe the stone directly without taking the trouble to plan out his work in advance – indeed, he may have had no idea how to plan out his work, having only received training in carving – or, he might himself sketch out some kind of a framework before he began to carve, thus carrying out the whole operation on his own. Something close to the second scenario, perhaps, accounts for an often-mentioned text of a

¹⁰ Grasby (2009).

¹¹ The 'chiaroscuro' effect so obtained was to become the hallmark of all early imperial Roman letters. Catich (1968), a signwriter himself, set this point out with clear illustrations and examples. He argued most forcefully for the priority of the brush over the chisel in the form of Roman inscriptions.

¹² The precise ratio of the geometry used (based on the width of the paintbrush as a unit of the length of the side of the square) varied in the particular case and with chronological development, but the method and the principles remained constant, at least in the construction of certain earlier examples. Cf. Grasby (2009) 14. This formally rather rigid type of inscription Grasby terms 'regulated'; unplanned inscriptions, those at the other end of the spectrum, 'unregulated'. The oppositional terminology he uses can be compared with that of the Gordons, viz. 'guided' and 'freehand' capitals, cf. Gordon and Gordon (1957) 74. 'Regulated' inscriptions date from the Augustan period and by the third century the system perhaps lacked some of its earlier refinement.

¹³ Its existence had first been noticed by Hübner (1885) xxvii, but the demonstrated distribution, in Grasby's work, of knowledge of the grid template rule in inscriptions across the empire is remarkable and it suggests that the process was centrally instigated and authorised. It was, at least in a simple manner, as the *Julius Dominus dipinto*, discussed below, suggests, still operative and generally known in the third century. A *scriptor (titulorum)* is attested in *CIL* II 3222; *CIL* VI 9557 – as also an *inscriptor* in *CIL* VI 29942, 1 – all as listed in Von Petrikovits (1981) 100 and 112. This title would seem to indicate duties close to those of the *ordinator*. See also Hübner (1885) xxv–xvii.

¹⁴ 'Depending upon the purpose of the inscription, priorities change and the number of processes may increase or reduce', thus Grasby (2009) 14.

third-century inscription set up by Palmyrene auxiliary troops in Africa.¹⁵ The relevant part of the text reads, with restoration, as follows:¹⁶

... [milites n(umeri) pa]lmyr[enorum] fecer(unt)
[sub cura []] fausto tes(serario) leg(ionis) s(upra) s(criptae)
scr(i)b[is] et sculp[is]

This text apparently isolates the two separate stages, the setting out (*scr(i)b[is]*) and the carving process (*sculp[is]*), and the inscription has normally been interpreted as confirming that the two separate processes were each carried out by different parties. In fact, precisely how the work was actually parcelled out in the event is unclear. It is to be noted, of particular relevance to this paper, that the entire monument was made by the troops of the legion. No civilian assistance is mentioned.

At Dura-Europos there is some evidence that soldiers may, at least sometimes, have mapped out and constructed the *ordinatio* for inscriptions.¹⁷ A *dipinto*, instructive in this regard, was found in the *principia* [PLATE XLIII].¹⁸ The piece, a block of plaster, approximately 75 cm in height and 30 cm wide, and bearing a black-painted text, was found lying on the ground in what is described in the *Report* as ‘the corridor between rooms 8 and 9’: probably to be understood as the area marked 3 on the detail of the plan shown in PLATE XXXIV.¹⁹ Its presence here seems to confirm that military administrative activities were undertaken, as would be expected, in the small rooms behind the central atrium area of the *principia*.²⁰

This text was, as it says, apparently the work of Julius Domninus, a *librarius* of the *Legio IV Scythica*, or of one of his four clerical assistants whom it also mentions.²¹ No attempt to unravel its meaning or purpose seems yet to have been made. As given by Stauner, it reads as follows:²²

¹⁵ Discussed in Albertini and Massiéra (1939) no. 147 (cf. also no. 153). Another comparable example is *CIL* VIII 2482, and see Susini (1973) 11, nn. 27–8.

¹⁶ ‘Made by the legionary soldiers of the Palmyrene unit under the command of Faustus, the legionary *tesserarius*. He had the above text written and carved.’

¹⁷ Cf. Austin (2010).

¹⁸ First published in *Rep.* V, 224, no. 560 and pl. XXVII.1. Unfortunately, the block can no longer be traced and the single surviving photograph of it is not at all clear.

¹⁹ This *dipinto* has been dated to AD 222–3, based on some Aramaic letters upon it, not visible in the photograph.

²⁰ Von Petrikovits (1975) 68–78. The *principia* is marked as *praetorium* on the original plan.

²¹ Also published by Stauner (2004) 415–16, Qno. 397. The piece is currently missing and therefore the only photograph is that published in the *Report*. The details of the lettering are unfortunately very poorly visible in this.

²² ‘To the emperor, good fortune to us and to the highest Senate and the Roman populace, in the hope of good to Iulius Domninus Librarius and Aurelius Antiochus, Donnio Pasia, Septimio Sigilliano and Aurelio Magno, assistants of the Fourth Scythian Legion.’

*Impera[tori] | Caesari [---] | bona fortuna nobis | summo summo | S(enatui)
p(opulo)q(ue) [Romano] | S(enatus) p(opulus)q(ue) [Romanus] | spem bonam | Iulio
Domnino Lib[rario] et | Aurel[io] Antiocho | et Donnio Pasia | et Septimio Sigilliano
| et Aurelio Magno | adiutoribus | Leg(ionis) IIII Scy[thicae]*

The presence of the *librarius*, Iulius Domninus, heading up his team of four helpers (*adiutores*), suggests that these men, all legionary soldiers, are engaged in clerical work of some kind. The opening lines are the dedication to the emperor, but the abbreviation *SPQ[R]* (in line 5) is said to be used, customarily, in Rome and the provinces to designate a public space that is ‘under the control of public authority’, and which is available for the display of notices that concern public life.²³ The large *SPQ[R]*, then, may point to the use which these soldiers were accustomed to making of their work and may emulate the display area itself. It is possible that they, quite commonly, painted (or laid out) routine signs and notices for in-camp display. The piece, like the inscription put up by the Palmyrene unit discussed earlier, leads one to suppose that the soldiers, and particularly those of the clerical administrative offices, were sometimes responsible themselves for this task.

Any statement about this *dipinto* must be hedged with caution in the absence of the artefact itself. However, the whole block seems to bear layers of plaster or whitewash which indicate that it had been more than once painted over.²⁴ The surviving text does not make much sense, but it does list the names of the legionary clerks who were presumably responsible for its painting. It is at least possible that this piece bears the traces of clerical soldiers practising the type of lettering that they were required to use for display purposes around the camp. Certainly, the style of the lettering, as opposed to its content, seems here to be the more important thing, and I would argue that in this case the textual content is far less important than the activity to which it gives witness.

The *dipinto* may, in fact, represent what survives of a lesson in the construction of display lettering given by the *librarius*, Julius Domninus, to his four assistants.²⁵ Let me examine the evidence for this. The piece is written, brush-painted, in majuscule (‘capital’) letters throughout and these have been executed in different styles and sizes.²⁶ The large *SPQ[R]* stands out.

²³ Corbier (2007) 36.

²⁴ On top of the text a number of *graffiti* squiggles and lines have (later?) been added.

²⁵ Furthermore, this lesson was probably not the first to have been carried out on the block, but was simply the latest and therefore the most visible.

²⁶ By the term ‘capital’ I mean larger letters generally majuscule in form (i.e. contained inside head and baselines) and broadly comparable, in *ductus* and form, to those letters that we today call upper case.

It is carefully painted in a *scriptura monumentalis*, which contrasts with the rougher, more rapidly made and markedly smaller letters elsewhere.²⁷ Beneath the text as it stands, hard-point outlines of what seem to be the stems of monumental capital letters can be made out.²⁸ Just visible on the reproduced photograph also, are the hard-point outlines to the curves of <s> and of <p>, and these have been used as a guide for the painter, who has followed and overpainted them with his brush. This last, at least, is a fairly standard use of an underlying *ordinatio*.²⁹

Easily visible also, even on the poor photograph, are the very roughly drawn hard-point 'guidelines' that run right across the text space. My rough measurements in respect of these suggest that the distance between the head and base lines of the letters in lines 1, 2, 3 and 5 is, at least approximately, twice that between those enclosing the smaller writing inside the large <q>. This makes the letters in lines 1, 2, 3 and 5 twice the size of those inside the <q>. The ruled lines bisect the small letters inside the <q>. The roughly ruled lines are always the same distance apart. Someone seems to have taken a unit of measure, marked off the line ends with it, and joined those marks horizontally, drawing the lines by eye with a hard point or stylus across what is now the text space. Both larger and smaller letters were then fitted between the ruled lines proportionately, smaller letters straddling fewer pre-ruled lines, while the space between the lines was kept constant.³⁰ This might be a crude but useful technique in scaling letters so as to fit a specific area, say a wall space, a wooden notice board or for larger displays of lettering (painted, whether or not later cut) say on buildings around the camp.³¹

²⁷ The <q> of *SPQ[R]* is 28 cm in height and the text, from line 7 onwards, is written inside its round. The excavators say – not visible on the photograph at all – that the name of the Fourth Scythian legion is written again, in small letters 1 cm high, between the *populoque* and the large <p>. Below line 5 and reaching into the <q> is written <cy> in letters 0.95 cm high. Scratched in below the first line is *senatu* in letters 0.5 cm high.

²⁸ Such as occur on the 'capital' forms of the letters <p>, <r>, etc.

²⁹ Interestingly, many cruder *dipinti* and graffiti at Dura had been first scratched out before being overpainted. This may suggest wide general awareness of the principle of 'ordination'.

³⁰ In line 4 the scribe seems to try a different, smaller form of letter. This line is, however, very poorly visible.

³¹ To support my suspicion that geometry had been used generally in the construction of this piece, I asked Richard Grasby to take a look at the photograph. He, looking at the large <s> and the <p> and at the scoring around the letters, indeed perceived in their construction the use of a fairly complicated geometry, based on an underlying grid. He found square root 5 rectangles in use and possibly also compass-constructed circles for those letter curves that fit within them. He commented also on the 'marvellous' quality of the brush overpainting, and noted that the ratio of the stemwidth of <p> to its height was 1:13.5, which made, he observed, 'an unusually narrow and graceful letter'. I thank Richard Grasby sincerely for these comments, which were enclosed in a personal communication from him.

The evidence offered by the Julius Domninus text encourages a new consideration of the existence and identity of the *ordinator* in a military setting. It is quite possible that the clerks in the administrative *officia* who undertook such work had basic techniques for laying out those geometrically based grids that were occasionally required for grander, more formal camp inscriptions. But a further *dipinto* from Dura-Europos adds another element. This is a text left by the *actuarius* named Mocimus, which was found on the eastern wall of room W12 in the so-called ‘scribal complex’ [PLATE XLIV].³² The piece is painted in red, ‘capital’ letters in two different sizes, ca. 7 cm and ca 3 cm in height. It commemorates a sacrifice offered to Jupiter Optimus Maximus and to Minerva for a victory of Septimius Severus Pertinax, whom it also honours.³³ An *actuarius* is usually a deputy leader (under the *cornicularius*) in a military clerical office, but in certain circumstances, in religious practices for example, he could take a leading role.³⁴ In this case, the text suggests that Mocimus was overseeing the ceremonies for Minerva. This goddess was the protecting divinity of craftsmen and patroness of craftsmen’s guilds, and possibly also the deity of military clerks.³⁵ Minerva was also the goddess of victory, and the *Quinquatrus*, a five-day festival in her honour, is included in the Dura calendar of festivals, the papyrus *Feriale Duranum* [PLATE XLV].³⁶ Perhaps it was during these annual celebrations that the clerks held ceremonies for her in W12 as commemorated in Mocimus’s text.³⁷

Mocimus, assuming he himself executed the piece, obviously knew how to paint letters, and relatively enlarged letters too. His text is well set out and perfectly legible. He has used, as is common practice in finished formal Roman inscriptions, a larger, more monumental style of letter in the opening lines (1–6), which gives extra emphasis to this part of the text. There are medial points in these lines separating words (or abbreviations) and the

³² *Rep.* V, 152–66, and esp. 226–9, no. 561, pl. XXIX.2; also Stauner (2004) 416, Qno. 398. The piece measures 68 by 75 cm and dates to AD 194.

³³ As reproduced by Stauner, the text reads: *I(ovi) o(ptimo) m(aximo)/ Conservatori [cete]/- risque dis inmor[tali]/- bus pro salutem et vic-/tori(a) d(omini) n(ostri) Imp(eratoris) L(ucii) Sep(timi) Severi / [P]ert(inacis) Aug(usti) II [[D(ecimi) Cl(odii) Alb(ini) [Caes(aris)] II]]/ [Min]ervae sanct(ae) sacrum feci[t]/[. . .] Ieus Mocimi actuar(ius) n(umeri) per Tre [b]/-ium Maximum trib(unum) coh(ortis) II Ulp(iae) eq(uitatae)/[vo]tum solvit libens I[aetus] meruit.*

³⁴ Kubitschek (1894).

³⁵ Reeves (2004) 135, citing Hoey in Fink, Hoey and Snyder (1940); also Stauner (2004) 244, Qno. 28 with further references. Stauner cites fifteen further dedications made by military clerks to her, amongst which all those dated are of the late second/early third century.

³⁶ Reeves (2004) 148–50. *P. Dura* 54 = P.CtYBR inv. DP 2 qua (now held by the Beinecke Library, and visible online: <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu.papyrus/oneSet.asp?pid=DP2qua>).

³⁷ The excavators found other Roman period graffiti in this complex, much of which also suggests ‘religious’ activities.

letters themselves are well spaced and carefully formed; <o>, for example, has a full, round shape. Most letters have carefully made serif details on their terminals. This *dipinto* was not geometrically constructed, but done ‘freehand’, for the letters, although accomplished, are not all of a standard size. Straight lines, also, are distinctly wavy at times and this is probably intentional and an element of style (note in particular the lower ‘arm’ of <e>).

Lines 7–11, in contrast to lines 1–6, are painted in a relatively smaller-sized letter, and are generally less formal in character. Their informal characteristics show in the relatively sparser use of serifs on terminals, and in the stylisation that the painter chose to use, whereby he drew out the stem of the letter below the writing line of the letters, e.g. of <f> (line 7) and <a> (line 8, second instance), and also, more subtly, of <r>. The letters throughout are unshaded (or monoline), as is often the case in third-century inscriptions, and therefore they do not display the characteristic stroke dimensions of the best letters of the earlier empire. Indeed, Moci-mus painted them, very probably, using a pointed brush in place of the, earlier so widely used, broad-edged tool.

I suggested earlier that the *dipinto* left by Julius Domninus showed that the clerical soldiers were sometimes responsible for laying out the *ordinatio* of formal inscriptions when these were required. However, there were undoubtedly also times when a notice or sign for public display was needed quickly, and there was neither the time nor the need to go to the length of cutting a formal inscription.³⁸ The proficiency that Mocimus exhibits in his painted text suggests that the clerks in the administrative *officia*, those who were, let us assume, skilled at many kinds of writing and who wrote by profession, may also have undertaken sign and notice-board writing as a routine duty. This would have been done alongside both the drawing up of *ordinatio* for inscriptions and their more usual, routine work, the preparation of the administrative papyrus documentation.

There is an obvious, logical and natural connection between the two types of artisan: the clerk and what we might call the signwriter (who may, in some cases at least, have also carried out the carving of an inscription), which I think has been overlooked.³⁹ Today, in modern America

³⁸ Eck (1999) discusses this issue at some length.

³⁹ Examples can be drawn here from several earlier historical eras. De Rossi (1888) thought that Alcuin might himself have instructed the stonecarvers who carved his numerous epigrams at the school of St-Martin; Higgitt (1990) thought Anglo-Saxon monks may often have carved the inscriptions in their monastery; and Vezin (2007) discussed the phenomenon and the interrelations between monumental letters both on the stones and in the manuscripts of the later medieval period. See more generally on this issue, Durlat (1980) and Koch (1994).

both craftsmen draw on the same tradition: their knowledge of, and familiarity with, the lettering current in their day.⁴⁰ Their understanding is that all uses of writing, whatever the style, are essentially variations of the same alphabet (or alphabets, for scripts that have both a minuscule and a majuscule repertoire of letter forms). Letters and alphabets, are adjusted in form so as to properly conform to the particular purpose in hand, and differences between the lettering styles typically used in given situations stem from the particular role that the writing plays in the given circumstance. Letters are adapted by a writer according to his intentions. For example, in signs and inscriptions which are designed to attract attention and to be easily read, letters are eye-catching, say monumental or decorative in some way, and the craftsman will take time, relatively speaking, over his work. Similarly with the lettering used for emphasis or for titling in manuscripts or written documents, the craftsman calls attention to the letters.⁴¹

The painted letter (for reasons of expediency often white on a black-painted board) had always had priority over the monumental inscription in Rome and the provinces, and signs and notice boards of diverse types probably outnumbered inscriptions.⁴² On any given day, far more wooden notices, of various types, would have been seen than carved inscriptions.⁴³ Painted letters, because they were more ephemeral and would often, in any case, soon be removed, are generally far less noticed and less studied today.⁴⁴ This is partly, no doubt, due to lack of surviving evidence, but the two Dura *dipinti*, executed by the clerks in the administrative *officia*, give us a good idea of what such lettering looked like in the third century AD. Generally, in the city of Dura-Europos, there would have been a preponderance of painted notices, and many smaller signs, some official, some more personal in content. These would sometimes have to compete with official or military proclamations in restricted areas of the cities.⁴⁵ A craftsman who undertook painted lettering would always have been a presence, and the painted letter should

⁴⁰ Vezin (1997) 549; id. (2007) esp. 58–61.

⁴¹ These ideas are largely drawn from Durlat (1980).

⁴² Hübner (1885) xxvii–xxix stressed (using literary sources) the importance of painted boards etc. in early Rome; on the *album*, see Schmidt (1894). On the priority of painted letters in early Rome, see Marichal (1953) esp. 181. On the use of whitened tablets in Rome, see Meyer (2004) esp. 26–35.

⁴³ Crawford (1988); Eck (1998).

⁴⁴ E.g. Corbier (2007) for the communication of information by the authorities: ‘les modes usuels étaient la lecture publique et l’affichage temporaire’.

⁴⁵ Corbier (2005), id. (2007).

probably be regarded as inspiring, and providing the models for, both documentary and inscriptional lettering work.⁴⁶

We know that it was normal practice for military clerical training to include a standard 'capital' letterform in the taught repertoire of scripts. Several military papyri contain capital letters and these are used generally for headings or for 'highlighting' of names or ranks (such as in *P. Princeton Garrett Deposit* 7532R (= *ChLA* IX, 403)). There are many others.⁴⁷ The well-known papyrus document, the calendar of festivals known as the *Feriale Duranum* (*P. Dura* 54) found with the other Latin papyri in room W13, is unusual in being written entirely in capitals.⁴⁸

The *Feriale Duranum*, presumably a piece of display lettering, is written throughout in a monoline capital letter, executed with a relatively fine, but a rounded, rather than an edged, pen. There are several notable affinities between these pen-written capital letters and those used by Mocimus with his pointed brush in his *dipinto*.⁴⁹ Indeed, the chief differences between the two pieces rest not in specific discrepancies between the letter forms – these are all comparable and similar – but in the stylistic details of each which stem from their diverse media.

The letter <m>, for example, is similarly formed in each. The tops of the second and fourth strokes which overhang strokes 1 and 3 form a careful element of the stylisation in both documents. Mocimus has exaggerated this feature of <m>, particularly in those instances of the letter that occur in lines 1–4, by considerably increasing the overhang and adding serifs to the top ends of the strokes. This is a feature of carving, to which he defers in this instance, which mimics but formalises the slight upwards movement with which the pen-writer of the *Feriale* chose to begin these same

⁴⁶ This is true at least for majuscule or 'capital' styles of Roman lettering. 'Capital' letters are used in some of the earliest Roman documents: several early Latin books, e.g., are written throughout in 'capital' scripts. Gradually, in Roman writing as it progressed, a differentiation became more marked, and is perhaps at its peak in the third century, between the minuscule scripts in which the main body of a text would be written, and the 'capital' letters which were available for use in headings and titles, and to emphasise particular sections of textual content. A rare, early survival shows a scribe apparently practising both styles: *P. Mich.* VII, 459 (= *CLA* S, 1781). *P. Ant.* 1 (= *ChLA* IV, 261) preserves a possibly fourth-century writing lesson in both minuscule and majuscule alphabets.

⁴⁷ Marichal (1950) 134–7 provided a list, and to this many others could now be added.

⁴⁸ There are other parallels: e.g. *PSI* XI 1183a (= *ChLA* XXV, 785), which is not military; and *P. Lond.* 2723 (= *CLA* II, 212) / *P. Mich.* VII, 429 (= *ChLA* XLII, 1225), which comes from a military environment.

⁴⁹ The capital lettering of *P. Mich.* III, 164 (= *ChLA* V, 281) is also similar to that used in the Mocimus *dipinto*. See Gilliam (1957).

strokes.⁵⁰ In the *Feriale*, <m> has serif terminals, usually, only on the foot of stroke 1, while Mocimus commonly adds serifs to both the top and the foot ends of the diagonal strokes. Another strong element of stylisation in the lettering of the *Feriale* is the *contre-courbe* or counter-curve, as labelled by Mallon, at the tops of the letters and <r>. In the Mocimus piece, and <r> evoke monumental letter forms and do not exhibit this feature, but note the letter <d> (line 5), in which the curve of the letter similarly begins with a slight counter-curve at the start of the stroke. This stroke also far overreaches the body of the letter on its left-hand side, thus forming a slightly eccentric shape.⁵¹

It was Jean Mallon's great good fortune to come across, in the archaeological museum (presumably) at Mérida, Spain, a small informally made inscription on a tile [PLATE XLVI], bearing a quotation from Virgil (*Aen.* 5.1).⁵² He noticed the same counter-curve just described, used in the letters <r> and , in exactly the same way as in the *Feriale Duranum*. The serifs at the terminals of strokes are separately but carefully made. In this, they contrast with those on letters in the *Feriale*, which seem to have been made in one rapid pen movement as part of the stroke itself. The serified effect, however, is the same in both cases and the varied execution is an effect of the different media used rather than a stylistic difference.

In the lettering on the Spanish tile, in the same way as in the Mocimus *dipinto*, an effort seems to have been made to make the opening lines (two in this case) more formal in style than are lines 3–4. In lines 3–4, for example, the <e> is rounded and different in style to that in lines 1–2, in which <e> is a more formal square (capital), very like that used in the *Feriale*. The <a> in line 4 is also less formal, and is probably based on the cursive letter.

There are sufficient similarities between this small inscription and the script of the *Feriale Duranum* to suggest that the same scripts were practised right across the empire during this period, and that the quirky majuscule letters of the *Feriale*, which are apparently unique on papyrus, were similarly written and recognised elsewhere in the empire. The carver of the small tile was probably just using, as he thought was appropriate, a script that to him was more momentous, had more grandeur perhaps, than the minuscule cursive alphabet that he wrote for other, more ordinary purposes.

⁵⁰ Cf. also the treatment of <a> in each piece.

⁵¹ Possibly influenced by the form of cursive <d> in this era.

⁵² *Interea medium Aeneas iam classe tenebat*. See Mallon (1952) 180–1, pl. XVII; id. (1948).

The quotation with which I began this paper was taken from Giocondo's careful treatise in which the Humanist scribe attempted, ambitiously perhaps, to 'define beautiful letters, and to show how to form and use them properly'.⁵³ Being himself a calligrapher who wrote a fine cursive Italic hand, his interests extended also to architecture and epigraphy, and his thought, as with many Humanist scribes, brings to the fore the interplay between the two sciences.⁵⁴ The work is intended for the use of any craftsman who works with and understands letters, whatever be the medium in which he customarily works. Giocondo stresses the importance of proportion in lettering: letters, regardless of their size, should always be properly adjusted, in both height and width, to account for the perspective in the viewer's eye when he looks at them from the ground.⁵⁵ In his mind as he wrote this were the letters that he knew in his environment, public lettering writ large on many of the key buildings of the city in which he lived. His work speaks to all who work with and create letters, and it underlines the fact that the palaeographic traditions that underlie the work of all lettering craftsmen are the realm of no one artisan more than any other. All draw from the same pool, and they adapt what they find there according to their own specific needs.

⁵³ Ciapponi (1979) 20.

⁵⁴ For an introduction to some Humanist scribes and their practices, see Morison (1990) esp. ch. 3.

⁵⁵ Ciapponi (1979) 20, quoting fol. 97.

12 | The Bilingual Palmyrene–Greek Inscriptions at Dura-Europos

A Comparison with the Bilinguals from Palmyra

LOREN T. STUCKENBRUCK

Introduction

Frequently neglected among studies about how Greek and Semitic languages came into contact in the middle and eastern Mediterranean area are the numerous bilinguals found in inscriptions preserved mostly from the first three centuries AD. As is well known, the most abundant of these inscriptions come to us from Palmyra. These materials may add new dimensions to the study of Greek–Semitic bi- and multilingualism in the Hellenistic Roman Near East. Furthermore, these inscriptions provide some basis for examining how the contact between Greek and Aramaic in Palmyra compares with that of nearby locations such as Dura-Europos. The texts we are referring to form a surprisingly sizeable corpus. To date I have been able to identify just under two hundred Greek–Palmyrene Aramaic bilingual inscriptions among major collections and scattered publications.¹ Among these are some 187 inscriptions recovered mostly from Palmyra itself, plus another seventeen from Dura-Europos.²

¹ Some of these are conveniently gathered by Hillers and Cussini (1996), henceforth abbreviated as *PAT*. Cf. now *JGLS* XVII.1, ed. J.-B. Yon (Paris, 2012), not including the Durene documents. For the Dura-Europos inscriptions see *PAT* 1078, 1080 (bilingual according to Bertolino (2004)), 1085, 1089, 1117, 2831, 2832, though in some cases there are inaccuracies in the presentation of the inscriptions. For a collection and re-edition of inscriptions specific to Dura-Europos, see Bertolino (2004) esp. 39–48 (citations below follow numbering and transcriptions from here). One of the inscriptions (BA.J5.01), however, does not have parallel Palmyrene and Greek texts, but rather is bilingual in the sense that the Palmyrene text appears in Greek transliteration. Before this, the best edition of the Dura-Europos materials was published by Du Mesnil du Buisson (1939).

² In addition, some nine Latin–Palmyrene bilinguals are preserved from other parts of the world, of which three are honorific (*PAT* 0253, 0255, 0308), two are dedicatory (*PAT* 0248, 0249) and five are funerary (*PAT* 0246, 0250, 0251, 0990, 0994). Several inscriptions from Palmyra are trilingual (Latin–Greek–Aramaic; *PAT* 0591 funerary, 1413 honorary, 2801 funerary, 2824 dedicatory); one dedicatory bilingual was recovered from Cos (*PAT* 1616) and another one from Rome (*PAT* 0249).

Before looking more closely at the inscriptions from Dura-Europos, we may offer a few preliminary comments on the significance of this material as a whole, especially as far as the investigation of Greek–Semitic bilingualism goes. Why might these texts potentially be so important for the study of language contact, perhaps even translation, in the ancient world? Several reasons emerge: (1) *Date and location*. Many Palmyrene inscriptions, both monolingual (Greek and Palmyrene, respectively) and bilingual, bear dates indicating the year and month and, occasionally, even the day. Moreover, in many cases the original location of these is known. Such information makes it possible in a number of instances, therefore, to factor provenance and chronology into an analysis of the texts and, as such, provides a contrast with the much less easily dateable and locatable Greek translation literature (e.g. Septuagint translation traditions, Greek Sirach, Tobit, 1 Enoch, Aramaic Levi). In addition, such details offer some controls by which to evaluate related materials of similar genre. (2) *Physical juxtaposition*. Unlike translation literature and their *Vorlagen*, the parallel texts of the bilinguals are found side by side. The spatial relationship between the versions is, to be sure, variously represented, for example, with the Greek above the Aramaic, the Aramaic above the Greek, side by side on the same face of stone, front and back, or on different faces of a console. Nevertheless, it is at least clear that this juxtaposition invites analysis into how the content of the parallel texts is related, whether this means they are parallel, complementary or involve summaries. (3) *Existing correspondences between the Greek and Aramaic versions*. The spatial and chronological convergence of the parallel texts means they can be explored for the contemporaneous correspondences they reflect. This contemporaneity of the versions means that the nature of the contact between the languages must be examined for the degree to which the following possibilities (or combinations thereof) hold: (a) influence of the Palmyrene text on the Greek parallel, (b) influence of the Greek on the Palmyrene, and (c) independent production of the contiguous texts. (4) *Genre*. The kinds of bilingual inscriptions allow us to observe how the language contact worked in specific contexts or genres.³

Palmyrene Bilinguals as a Whole

With respect to this last point, the Palmyrene bilingual inscriptions are attested in all four main genres of inscriptions at Palmyra: (1) honorary,

³ Since this article does not interact as such with recent discussions on bilingualism at Palmyra, it is only proper to acknowledge here the studies by Taylor (2002) 317–24; Yon (2002) 23–36; Kaizer (2002) 27–34; Adams (2003) 248–64; Gzella (2005).

(2) official, (3) dedicatory and (4) funerary. In order to place the bilinguals at Dura-Europos in context, we describe each of these genres briefly in turn.

First, the *honorary or honorific inscriptions*.⁴ The highest proportion of bilingual texts belongs to this kind; the texts are engraved on consoles which once supported bronze statues of their subjects. This should come as no surprise since, attested in all three centuries of Palmyra's prosperity, many of them were written on behalf of patrons and leaders who assured the safety of the trade caravans. The inscriptions themselves often demonstrated the multicultural occasions that gave rise to the appearance of two versions. For instance, in the bilingual text published in *CIS* 3924, dated as early as August AD 19, a statue was erected in honour of a certain Yedeibel by both 'Palmyrene merchants and Greek businessmen', apparently because of his financial contribution towards the building of the temple of Bel. These honorary inscriptions were all placed in public areas of the city (in or near sanctuaries and colonnades) where they were visible to all who travelled through. During the course of the second century AD there is a noticeable shift among these inscriptions from longer Palmyrene versions to shorter texts, in comparison with the Greek counterparts.

Second, *official inscriptions*. Here the most obvious example is the well-known tax law of AD 137.⁵ This inscription, which contains a total of over four hundred lines of Greek and Palmyrene text, enumerates the old and new fiscal policies (the latter determined by 'the council and the people' of Palmyra) concerning the taxation of incoming and outgoing goods. This decree, intended for public reading, was placed in four 'pages' on one gigantic stone, five metres in length, across from a once-existent temple of Rabaseira. To some degree, the 'official' type of inscription overlaps with those that served honorary purposes, because some of the latter were the result of decrees made by the Palmyrene administration.

Third, the *dedicatory inscriptions*.⁶ Here we have a number from Palmyra, mostly in temple precincts. Interestingly, the graffiti bilinguals aside, at Dura-Europos this is the genre of the three most important bilingual

⁴ See *PAT* 0115, 0197, 0256, 0260, 0262, 0263, 0266, 0267, 0269, 0270, 0271, 0272, 0273, 0274, 0276, 0277, 0278, 0279, 0280, 0281, 0282, 0283, 0284, 0285, 0286, 0287, 0288, 0289, 0290, 0291, 0292, 0293, 0294, 0295, 0296, 0297, 0298, 0299, 0300, 0305, 0306, 0309, 0312, 0313, 0314, 0316, 0317, 1349, 1352, 1353, 1356, 1357, 1360, 1366(?), 1369, 1371, 1372, 1373, 1374, 1375, 1376, 1377, 1378, 1382, 1383(?), 1384, 1387, 1389, 1392, 1395, 1396, 1397, 1398, 1399, 1403, 1405, 1407, 1409, 1412, 1413, 1414, 1415, 1417, 1419, 1421, 1422, 1423, 1424, 1425, 1942, 2763, 2769, 2778 and 2815.

⁵ *CIS* 3913 = *PAT* 0259.

⁶ See *PAT* 0065, 0247, 0258, 0340, 0344, 0349, 0368, 0377, 0412, 0436, 0437, 1062, 1063, 1131, 1540, 1548, 1559, 1571, 1590, 1917, 2625, 2755, 2764, 2770, 2779, 2824 (trilingual with Latin).

inscriptions (BA.F1.01, n.d.; BA.F1.02, AD 228–9; and a Hatrean bilingual, BA.H2.01, n.d., from the temple of Atargatis). For the most part, this genre reflects the popular piety of Palmyra's citizens. Of particular interest and importance are the numerous texts which refer to an unnamed god ('to him whose name is blessed forever').⁷ Significantly, no dedicatory inscription is extant in a Greek monolingual inscription. A further point of interest is the Palmyrene practice of keeping the deities' names indigenous, whether in the Palmyrene texts themselves or also in the other languages the Palmyrenes used (Greek, Latin) in which such names are frequently transliterated.⁸ For the most part, the Aramaic versions of the dedicatory texts remain robust in parity of length in comparison to their Greek counterparts. Indeed, not infrequently the Greek texts use the more concise case endings such as the accusative over against the propensity in the Aramaic to use verbs (such as *qymw*, 'they set up'), in addition to further words such as inseparable prepositions (*la-*), conjunctions (*wa-*) and other small expressions. This results in the impression that the dedicatory inscriptions frequently are a reflection of indigenous piety.

Fourth, there are *funerary inscriptions*.⁹ In Palmyra, these are located mostly in sepulchral towers and subterranean tombs which housed the remains of the dead. Greek versions sometimes appear with their Palmyrene counterparts on outside plaques, cornices or lintels of the entrances. The interiors of these structures, however, are most often engraved in Aramaic. This observable spatial distinction illustrates a certain choice of language, with Greek representing the more accessible, and therefore public, texts while the Palmyrene was more likely to be used as the default language for more private contexts. There is a further way in which language contact between Greek and Aramaic is illuminated by this genre. More than the other kinds of (bilingual) inscriptions, the relationship between the parallel versions remained the most constant, that is, unlike the shift towards increasingly longer Greek parallel and shorter Aramaic texts, the relative length of the corresponding Greek and Aramaic texts seems to have remained relatively constant.¹⁰

⁷ These are discussed in detail by Milik (1972).

⁸ See Kaizer (2009a) esp. 243–4.

⁹ See PAT 0023, 0057, 0059, 0094, 0117, 0118, 0469, 0471, 0472, 0473, 0474, 0486, 0512, 0514, 0515, 0519, 0520, 0548, 0552, 0557, 0558, 0559, 0565, 0567, 0568, 0569, 0570, 0571, 0572, 0591, 0762, 0763, 1134, 1135, 1138, 1141, 1142, 1143, 1147, 1149, 1154, 1216, 1217, 1221, 1230, 1233, 1572, 1790, 1815, 1816, 1817, 1824, 1825, 1826, 1827, 2647, 2651, 2726, 2786, 2801 (trilingual with Latin), 2817, 2819, 2820, 2823.

¹⁰ For an exception see CIS 4120 (AD 59), in which the Greek text of seven lines occurs opposite only two lines of its Aramaic counterpart.

Fifth, in a very few cases, some tesserae are inscribed with short parallel Greek and Palmyrene texts, consisting of proper names.¹¹ These have no bearing on the materials from Dura-Europos.

It is not always possible to identify what type the sometimes very fragmentary bilinguals from Dura-Europos belong to (e.g. BA.H1.01). At the very least, however, they include honorary (BA.N7.01, AD 31–2; BA.J7.01, AD 168–9; BA.G8.01?, n.d.) and dedicatory (BA.F1.01, n.d.; BA.F1.02, AD 228–9) inscriptions, while in a number of instances the texts simply consist of equivalent proper names among murals, for example, at the Roman bath near the Palmyra gate at the west-south-west wall (BA.M7.01-09; cf. BA.X.01). What can we make of this meagre evidence regarding the relationship between the Palmyrene linguistic culture at Dura-Europos and that of Palmyra itself?

Relationships between Parallel Greek and Palmyrene Texts

Here we shall briefly explore five different ways the Greek and Aramaic texts are related to one another among the Palmyrene inscriptions and ask how these patterns are reflected among the materials recovered from Dura-Europos. We have already noted above the obvious point that bilingual inscriptions from antiquity offer us: contiguity of parallel texts. This association should not mislead us to think that the linguistic relationship between the Semitic and Greek texts is in any way uniform, nor that here we have to do with something which transparently presents itself *as a whole* as ‘translation’ from one language into another. At present,¹² we are able to identify five strategies for the presentation and linguistic interrelationship among the parallel texts at work. In each case, I shall note, as appropriate, whether or not this is reflected among the Dura-Europos bilinguals.

First, there are bilinguals for which *all or significant parts of the texts do not overlap in content*. In very rare cases among the extant inscriptions, two versions found side-by-side do not contain any linguistic correspondences. At the same time, the content of each version demonstrates their relationship as one of supplementary information. One example may be observed in a dedicatory inscription first published in CIS 4022 (BA.F1.02, dated AD 225).¹³ The Greek part of the text, which appears on four lines below the

¹¹ See PAT 2452 and 2527; cf. further, from Antioch, PAT 2827.

¹² Such a study has yet to be properly undertaken and remains a *desideratum*. The observations offered in this paper are based on a preliminary analysis of all the available materials.

¹³ See PAT 0368. See the improved readings of the CIS publication in Schlumberger (1951) no. 73, and further discussion in Milik (1972) 262–3.

Palmyrene, contains the following details: the names of two dedicants (line 1 – Ἀββαθα καὶ Ἀγγάθ), a participle expressing thanksgiving (line 3 – εὐξάμενοι), which together with the verb (line 4 ἀνέθηκαν, ‘they offered’), could be interpreted as the giving of a vow, though more probably simply means the giving of something as an expression of thanks. The Aramaic version, on the other hand, mentions the name of the deity (*lʾlmʾ rḥmnʾ tḇʾ*), the reason for the inscription (i.e. the deity’s response or answer [to a petition?], [*d*]yʾ *nh* = ‘[bec]ause he answered’), and the date. A comparable parallel structure, especially for the Aramaic text, is reflected in other Palmyrene bilinguals.¹⁴ The difference can thus be accounted for by the adherence of one or the other (or both) texts to formal conventions associated with the language of that text.

A similar phenomenon may be at work in a dedicatory bilingual found at the Palmyra gate in Dura-Europos (BA.F1.01). The parallel texts have no apparent equivalents, though the inscription is admittedly not completely preserved. The Greek text reads ‘Athenathan has made the offering’ (Γαθηνάθανες ἀνέθηκαν), while the Aramaic, for which line 1 is missing, mentions ‘the son of Zabdʾate son of Baba’. It is possible that the root ZBD corresponds to ‘-nathan’ in the Greek name, but the equivalence is otherwise unclear.

To a more limited degree, a wide divergence seems also to hold for another Dura-Europos dedicatory inscription likewise found at the Palmyra gate. Dated to the year 556 (i.e. AD 244–5), the Greek and Aramaic agree in having correspondences for the deity (‘the deity Nemesis’, transliterated as such in the Palmyrene text: *lnmsys*) and for the name of the dedicant (Maloka, son of Shoudai, the Palmyrene [with Aramaic, of course, having Tadmor]). At several points, however, the versions contain different, yet complementary, information: (a) the Greek text adds two further designations (Latin names) for the dedicant: ‘Julius Aurelius’ (forming a common *trias nomina*); (b) the Aramaic text furnishes a date (i.e. the year) missing in the Greek; and (c), as happens in some bilinguals from Palmyra, the Greek text mentions that the dedicant ‘set this up in gratitude’ (in the formula, εὐξάμενος ἀνέθηκεν), while the Aramaic has the formulaic yet dynamic equivalent *ʾbd wmwʾd*, ‘he made with thanks’. Here we may note the proximity of date between this bilingual of Dura-Europos and the analogous one from Palmyra (CIS 4022) mentioned above.

Second, in some bilingual texts, *one of the versions is significantly shorter than the other*; as such, the shorter parallel text functions as a summary. The published editions allow us to identify at least thirteen clear instances.

¹⁴ See PAT 0436 and 0437.

Of these seven are honorary inscriptions, three funerary and three votive or dedicatory. In this connection it may be interesting to note that Greek summaries of longer Aramaic versions are attested at Palmyra only in inscriptions that preserve dates before the third century AD (CIS 3915 [AD 21]; CIS 3917 [AD 108]; CIS 3921 [AD 120]; CIS 3994 [AD 114]; CIS 3998 [AD 132]; CIS 4090 [?]; CIS 4091 [?]; *Inv.* IX 11 [AD 24];¹⁵ *Inv.* XII 46 [AD 129];¹⁶ Ingholt (1936) 99 [?]; Ingholt (1938) 120 [AD 98];¹⁷ Cantineau (1938) 78 [AD 39]; RSP 24 [AD 147];¹⁸ RSP 25 [?]).¹⁹ By contrast, those inscriptions with Aramaic summaries of longer Greek versions, with one clear exception attested (CIS 4120 [AD 59]),²⁰ tend to be later (cf. CIS 3912 [?]; CIS 3934 [AD 254]; CIS 3970 [AD 203]; CIS 4202 [?]; CIS 4215 [?]; Cantineau (1938) 155 [AD 241]; al-As'ad and Teixidor (1985) 276 [?]; Milik (1972) 36 [AD 145]).²¹

At Dura-Europos, evidence for this is attested in the dedicatory bilingual found at the mithraeum, under the altar well inside the interior (BA. J7.01). The text in the Palmyrene version reads:

dkrn ṭb 'bd ṭpny 'štr[ṭg']
br zbd'h dy 'l qšt' dy bd[wr']
byrh' ḏr šnt 480

A good memorial has made Etpeni the soldier (= *strategos*),
 son of Zabda'eh, who has responsibility over the archers who are in D[ur]a,
 in the month of Adar, year 480 [i.e. AD 169].

The Greek text, located just to the right of the relief (a depiction of the slaying of a bull), simply gives the name and title of the dedicant: 'Etpani the *strategos*'. A comparison with the texts from Palmyra suggests that the instance of a longer Aramaic version with short Greek summary was a more traditional way in which the two languages were related. The presence of the common Greek loan word in the Palmyrene text ('*štrṭg'*) should not mislead one to think that the Aramaic text is primarily to be understood as one that comes under the dynamic influence of Greek. The

¹⁵ *Inv.* IX 11, 19–20. The Greek text is actually contiguous to a nearby Palmyrene text in the south-west portico of the temple of Bel (*Inv.* IX 13), but in fact corresponds to *Inv.* 11.

¹⁶ *Inv.* XII, 46.

¹⁷ For the texts to this list of inscriptions see, respectively, PAT 0261, 0263, 0267, 0436, 0437, 1559, 1352, 0065 and 0094.

¹⁸ Cf. PAT 1815.

¹⁹ For these inscriptions, see, respectively, PAT 0216, 0263, 0267, 0340, 0344, 0436, 0437, 1352, 1559, 0065, 0094, 2779, 1815, 1816.

²⁰ PAT 0469.

²¹ PAT 0258, 0280, 0316, 0558, 0571, 2786, 2820, 1063.

Greek equivalent, of course, would be expected to be στρατηγός.²² However, the Greek version spells the word ἱστάρτηγα (*sic*) which, with the transliteration of the prosthetic *aleph*, looks more like an adaptation to the Palmyrene spelling! It would thus be better to recognise that the Greek loan word had already been used as such for a very long time (the spelling was a rather common transliteration of the Greek) and had become part of the Palmyrene military vocabulary. Both the spelling and the already well-established usage of the loan word are consistent with the view that Palmyrene is functioning as the dominant language. Although the inscription itself presents an uncharacteristic Palmyrene participation in the Mithras cult, the bilingual contact in the parallel texts leaves little doubt about the indigenous sentiments of the Palmyrenes behind this inscription in Dura-Europos.²³

The three further ways (3, 4 and 5) parallel texts in bilingual inscriptions are related involve instances where the texts correspond to one another more fully. We may characterise these as follows:

Third, there are a number of bilinguals in which *the parallel versions overlap considerably, but which display either some differences in content or contain smaller amounts of detail absent in the opposite text*. These small-scale differences may include, for example, (a) additional names for individuals (usually in the Greek texts) not found in the other version, or (b) the substitution of one proper name, for example of a deity or a month, for another.

The minor differences, where these stem from corresponding phrases or words, reflect either adherence to linguistic conventions in Greek or Aramaic, respectively, or to indigenous equivalents, such as the names for deities. An example from Palmyra would be the honorary bilingual published in CIS 3959 (dated AD 131),²⁴ according to which the Greek text refers to Zeus while the corresponding section of the Aramaic speaks of Ba'al-Shamin, Duraḥlun and perhaps another deity.²⁵

At Dura-Europos, the dedicatory bilingual (BA.N7.01) recovered from the temple of Zeus Kyrios preserves corresponding Greek and Aramaic texts to the right and left, respectively, of a relief depicting both the deity and dedicant. The text, dated to AD 31–2, corresponds in many details, with three exceptions: (1) The donator's name in the Greek is Σελευκος Λευκιου, whereas the Aramaic simply has Lucius (*lwky*). (2) In place of

²² On this, see Bertinelli Angeli (1970) 66–7.

²³ Cf. further the discussion by Kaizer (2009a) 241, and, more generally, Dirven (1999) 260–72. On the mithraeum and its inscriptions, see also the contribution to this volume by T. Gnoli.

²⁴ PAT 0305.

²⁵ For a detailed examination of this text, see Davis and Stuckenbruck (1992).

Zeus Kyrios in the Greek, the Palmyrene text has ‘Baʿal-Shamin, the god (ʿlh)’ (compare the indigenous equivalence given in *CIS* 3959 mentioned above). (3) There is a difference that is analogous to what we find in many of the (mostly) earlier bilinguals from Palmyra: the giving of a date in the Greek at or near the end of the text corresponds to the date provided at or near the beginning of the Aramaic text. With only one extant exception, a dedicatory inscription dated to AD 233 (*CIS* 4031; cf. perhaps also the funerary text in Cantineau (1930) 545, no. 13, AD 101 and 192²⁶), such a difference in the location of the date occurs in the earlier bilinguals: *Inv.* VIII 59 (AD 104); *Inv.* IX 20 (AD 56); *Inv.* X 7 (before AD 88); al-Asʿad and Teixidor (1985) 273, no. 2 (AD 99).²⁷ Thus the form adopted in the Dura-Europos bilingual in the temple of Zeus Kyrios is consistent with and fits well into the early period of evidence from Palmyra.

Fourth, most often attested among the bilinguals at Palmyra are *parallel versions which overlap almost completely in content, but which use formulae indigenous to each language in communicating the same point*.²⁸ Although this phenomenon cannot be confirmed among the Dura-Europos inscriptions, a discussion of this helps in reconstructing the larger bilingual context with which to place the Dura-Europos bilinguals into conversation. By way of illustration, it is possible here to refer to several among a large number of examples.

- (a) If we restrict observations to sufficiently preserved *funerary* materials,²⁹ it is also possible for one version, often a less concise Aramaic, to repeat a stereotypical phrase (such as *lyqr*, ‘for the honour of’, in funerary inscriptions) where the Greek only offers the equivalent (τειμή) once³⁰ or simply the dative case.³¹ That these are instances of parallel texts in relationship to one another becomes clearer when one observes that in many cases the absence or presence of such a formula tends to occur in both versions rather than in just one.³²

²⁶ Cf. *PAT* 0377.

²⁷ Respectively, *PAT* 1217, 1356, 1366, 2817.

²⁸ By ‘indigenous’ I refer here to formulae or expressions in the Greek or Aramaic versions which are regularly found among the monolinguals of these languages.

²⁹ The comparison here (involving honorific terms) could also be carried out for the honorific inscriptions (see below) where, however, the linguistic issues are different.

³⁰ Cf. *PAT* 0294, 0519.

³¹ Cf. *PAT* 0515. Analogous to this is the use of the dative, genitive or accusative alone in the Greek opposite only one instance of *lyqr*–; see *PAT* 0057, 0059, 0117, 0471, 0515, 1134, 1143, 1216, 1372, 2815, 2817, 2819.

³² Absent in both versions in *PAT* 0543. A one-to-one correspondence can be observed in both versions in various ways: (a) Greek gen. = Aramaic prep. *l-* (*PAT* 0474, 0486, 0520, 2820); (b) Greek dative = Aramaic prep. *l-* (*PAT* 0118, 0558, 0569, 0570, 0591[trilingual], 1135, 1154,

- (b) Another pattern of correspondence persisted in Palmyra among the *honorific* bilingual inscriptions. Here we have to do with different linguistic means employed in Greek and Aramaic, respectively, to honour one or more individuals.³³ While allowing for variations on each formulaic phrase, many Aramaic texts in bilinguals are structured according to a pattern that is frequently attested among the monolinguals as well:
- (i) An inscription opens, if not with a date, then with an identifying phrase such as *šlm' dnh dy* ('this is a statue of') or simply *šlm* ('statue of').
 - (ii) There follows the name of the person honoured and ensconced, to which are added: a relative pronoun *dy*; a verb (usually a form of *bd*, 'to do/make', or the *af'el* for *qwm*, *qymw*, 'they set up/erected'); the preposition *l-* with the appropriate pronominal suffix; the subject of the verb (i.e. the one or ones responsible for erecting the honorary statue); and, finally, towards the end of the text, a recapitulative phrase *lyqrh*, 'for/in his honour', or *lyqrhwn*, 'for/in their honour'.

The corresponding pattern followed by many Greek versions is usually more concise:

- (i) Instead of mentioning the statue outright, the text often refers to the honoured person or persons with the accusative case plus the nominative case to denote the person or persons who gave the honour.
- (ii) Much less often than in the Aramaic versions, is there a verb (found only in the Greek for *CIS* 3914 [AD 175]; *CIS* 3924 [AD 19]; *CIS* 3948 [AD 193]; and *Inv.* X 24 [AD 164]).³⁴ As in the Palmyrene versions, the recapitulation (ἐνεκεν τειμῆς or a variation thereof) is often used.

Of the some seventy-nine extant bilingual honorary inscriptions that contain enough legible material for study, no less than forty-five dated to throughout the first three centuries AD hold to this pattern of correspondences in both Palmyrene and Greek texts.

1217, 1790, 1816, 2726, 2801; cf. 2786); (c) Greek εἰς + acc. = Aramaic prep. *l-* (*PAT* 0023, 0472, 0473); (d) Greek εἰς + acc. = Aramaic *lyqr-* (*PAT* 2817); (e) Greek τειμή = Aramaic *lyqr-* (*PAT* 0469, 0486, 0512, 0548 *bis*, 0552, 0557, 0565); (f) Greek gen. – Aramaic *dy* (*PAT* 0543).

³³ Inscriptions of this sort are absent among the Dura-Europos Palmyrene inscriptions.

³⁴ See *PAT* 0260, 0270, 0294 and 1372.

One of the deviations from this pattern has to do with the placement of the subject, that is, those who are responsible for erecting the inscription. It is possible in such cases to explain the deviation. In the Greek versions, if someone is being honoured by ‘the council and the people’ of the city (ἡ βουλή καὶ ὁ δῆμος), then the subject (i.e. the council and the people) is moved to the beginning of the text, perhaps to draw attention to the official nature of the honour being rendered. This happens almost invariably – i.e. twenty-six times, with one possible exception in *Inv.* IX 11a (AD 24)³⁵ in which the subject, however, is ‘the people’ (ὁ δῆμος) of the Palmyrenes, with the council not being mentioned. In three of these municipal texts, the Palmyrene version conforms to the Greek text – and only where more than one individual is being honoured – by placing the subject ‘council and the people’ at or near the beginning (*CIS* 3914 [AD 175]; *CIS* 3930 [AD 139]; *CIS* 3931 [AD 139]; Milik (1972) 13 [AD 145]).³⁶

Another variation in the Palmyrene texts occurs with increasing frequency during the years leading up to the fall of Palmyra in AD 273. The phrase referring to ‘the statue’ and the relative pronoun *dy* drop out entirely and the version opens simply with the name of the honoured person, who becomes the direct object of the verb: *Inv.* X 29 (already AD 161); *CIS* 3943 (AD 267); *RÉS* II 819 (AD 265); *CIS* 3937 (AD 258); *CIS* 3939 (AD 262); *CIS* 3947 (AD 271).³⁷ Though the verb is itself retained as before in the Aramaic, this variation seems to reflect a growing approximation of the Palmyrene versions to the Greek formula (i.e. a simple accusative plus the nominate subject). Such an adjustment only occurs in one Aramaic monolingual, the latest one attested at Palmyra (*Inv.* X 28 [AD 272]) just before the defeat by the emperor Aurelian and his army. This development is especially interesting since these later inscriptions honoured political figures of Palmyra who carried titles such as ἵππικός (of equestrian rank), βουλευτής (councillor), ἐπίτροπος (procurator) and βασίλισσα (queen, i.e. Zenobia) during a time when Palmyra was beginning to extend its political and military influence westward into the remainder of Syria, Palestine and Egypt.

The influence of Greek phraseology, reflected here and suggested by the mostly late dates on bilinguals with Aramaic summaries of the Greek, seems to correspond to a gradual shift of awareness in Palmyra of its political importance during the late Hellenistic period. Though none of this stylistic shift in pattern can be confidently traced to the materials recovered from Dura-Europos, one inscription is worth mentioning in this connection.

³⁵ *PAT* 1352.

³⁶ *PAT* 0260, 0276, 0277, 1062.

³⁷ See *PAT* 1373, 0289, 0287, 0282, 0285, 0293.

This is the bilingual excavated from the Palmyra gate (BA.F1.02), in which the closely corresponding Greek and Aramaic texts, produced by one who expressly called himself a ‘Palmyrene’ (Παλμυρηνός, *tdmry*), dedicate to the goddess Nemesis (θεῖᾱ Νέμεσι, *lnmsys*) whose image is carved on the stele above. While the Nemesis cult was not unknown among Palmyrenes,³⁸ the practice of transliterating the divine name rather than supplying an indigenous one runs not only counter to customary practice in Palmyra itself, but also to the early example from Dura-Europos (AD 31–2) noted above (BA.N7.01). Moreover, the fact that a number of details in this short bilingual do not expressly match makes the convergence on the divine name all the more conspicuous.

Fifth and finally, there are a few bilingual inscriptions in which the parallel versions correspond almost word for word. This can, naturally, be expected of short inscriptions consisting almost exclusively of proper names. It is often observed, of course, that there are only a few cases of bilinguals consisting of closely corresponding versions involving either a translation of one version into the other or a closely coordinated production of both texts. However, a number of examples from Palmyra, at least among funerary inscriptions, suggest that this was arguably more often the case than generally supposed. In this connection, see Ingholt (1935) 110 (AD 263); Gawlikowski (1970) 71 (AD 215); *CIS* 3937 (AD 258); *CIS* 3939 (AD 262); *CIS* 3941 (?); *CIS* 3943 (AD 267); *CIS* 4031 (AD 233); *CIS* 4124 (AD 83); *CIS* 4134 (AD 103); *CIS* 4163 (AD 119); *CIS* 4214 (?); *Inv.* IV, 13 (AD 232); *Inv.* IV, 14 (AD 179); *Inv.* X, 40 (AD 199); Cantineau (1930) 545 (Greek + text B, AD 192); and *RSP* 33 (?).³⁹ No bilingual funerary inscriptions are preserved from Dura-Europos and, aside from the corresponding proper names on wall murals (BA.M7.01–09), there are no such parallel texts from there which have been brought into such close correspondence.

Conclusion

The discussion above has shown the variety and complexity of bilinguality as expressed among the Aramaic–Greek inscriptions from Palmyra. In addition, we have seen that the limited evidence of this from Dura-Europos can to some degree be contextualised by reference to this material.

The few dateable Palmyrene bilingual inscriptions we have from Dura-Europos stem from different periods, that is, to AD 31–2 (BA.N7.01), to AD

³⁸ See the discussion by Kaizer (2001).

³⁹ Cf., respectively, *PAT* 0057, 0118, 0283, 0285, 0287, 0377, 0474, 0486, 0515, 0570, 1142, 1143, 1376, 1790, 1824.

168–9 (BA.J7.01) and to AD 228–9 (BA.F1.02). Two of these are dedicatory inscriptions (BA.N7.01, BA.F1.02), while one is honorific (BA.J7.01). The dedicatory texts offer firm evidence for language contact among the Palmyrene inhabitants at Dura-Europos within a religious setting. A striking feature of Palmyrene piety is, of course, the occurrence of Nemesis in a bilingual that transliterates the divine name (BA.F1.02), though in the other inscription (BA.N7.01) the more customary indigenous designation for the deity (Ba'al-Shamin) is used alongside the Greek designation for the deity ('to Zeus Kyrios, Δεῖ κυρίως).

As we have noted, towards the end of the era of Palmyrene self-rule, Greek was gaining a certain ascendancy in relative length as well as in the influence it exerted on many parallel Aramaic texts through increasing numbers of loan words. The transliteration of Nemesis in BA.F1.02 during this latter period would be in line with this development. At the same time, the inscription's way of offering at once overlapping and complementary texts marks a continuation of ways many of the parallel versions in bilinguals correspond to and interact with each other at Palmyra.

The Greek and Palmyrene versions in two other inscriptions (BA.N7.01 and BA.J7.01), which are earlier, also share formal characteristics with a number of the Palmyrene inscriptions from the first and second centuries AD. In this respect, despite the very limited evidence available, one may plausibly argue that the Dura-Europos inscriptions reflect some of the patterns of bilinguality and language contact that characterised the texts from Palmyra. Of course, at the same time, not too much should be concluded from so little evidence about how the Palmyrene residents of Dura-Europos related to their immediate environment. It is clear, however, that while they showed some signs of religious accommodation (e.g. participation in the cult of Mithras), some at least made use of traditional forms of expression – including the way Greek and Palmyrene Aramaic had been brought into physical and linguistic contact with one another in Palmyra. A final note: the possibility of comparing the Palmyrene bilingual inscriptions at Dura-Europos with those from Palmyra itself and, more specifically, the possibility of being able to draw the comparisons with more time-conditioned developments amongst the materials at Palmyra may suggest, at least in terms of the way Greek–Semitic language contact worked, that at Dura-Europos we are not dealing with a Palmyrene community which, despite any traits acquired through its socio-religious context, had broken off from Palmyra itself. Instead, the Palmyrene residents of Dura-Europos, at least linguistically, continued to orientate themselves around and draw from Palmyra as their 'mother city'.

Pondering everyday issues of economic reality in ancient economic history very quickly leads to the limits of perceptibility. Common exceptions to this rule are places and regions where, by chance of circumstance, a corpus of historical sources exists, providing researchers with an opportunity to comment on the economic behaviour of individuals at that time. This is the case with Vindolanda, located just south of Hadrian's Wall, and its writing tablets;¹ with Pompeii and Herculaneum and their copious traditions of various documentary sources;² with Egypt and its tremendous papyrological tradition;³ and – last but not least – with Dura-Europos. Though not recorded in the literary sources that deal with the city,⁴ economic life and everyday economic conduct are widely displayed in inscriptions and graffiti, as well as in documents written on papyrus or parchment. Dura-Europos's historical tradition is even more impressive as it mostly originates from the third century AD, an epoch generally associated with a major economical crisis of the *Imperium Romanum*. Notably, these particular records, though originating in turbulent times in a troubled neighbourhood of the Roman empire, give no account of an economic crisis, despite the comments of Mikhail Rostovtzeff.

Before everyday economic life in Dura-Europos can be depicted, its economic determinates should be described. Even though the city was surrounded by desert on its western and southern sides, its location on the bank of the Euphrates provided excellent conditions for farming, despite the arid climate.⁵ Moreover, the breeding of livestock obviously played an important role in the city's surroundings,⁶ though Dura's actual territory was not limited to its immediate surroundings, but stretched from the Khabur estuary in the north as far as Eddana in the south;⁷ it thus extended approximately 100 km along the Euphrates. The Euphrates also constituted

¹ Cf. e.g. Bowman (1994) 65–81; Birley (2002) 128–35; Onken (2003).

² Cf. e.g. Andreau (1974); Jongman (1988); Gröschler (1997).

³ Cf. e.g. Drexhage (1991); Habermann (2000).

⁴ Cf. Cumont (1926) lxx–lxxviii.

⁵ Cf. Kroll (1931) 184; Geyer (1988).

⁶ Cf. Ruffing (2000) 78. For pastures in the hinterland of Dura, see Goldman (1990) 7.

⁷ Cf. Gawlikowski (1983) 57.

the largest traffic route, connecting the city with Zeugma to the north and therefore with north Syria and Asia Minor. On top of that, the river provided Dura-Europos access to the major trade routes to the Persian Gulf and to the east respectively.⁸ The significance of the Euphrates route is vividly highlighted by the *Parthian Stations* of Isidore of Charax.⁹ The population of Dura-Europos itself should be estimated at approximately five to six thousand inhabitants, analogous to Hellenistic times,¹⁰ even though the general circumstances of the Roman empire at that time could lead to the suggestion that the demographic increase during this period also included Dura.¹¹ Furthermore, at least during the third century AD, there were nearly one thousand soldiers stationed in the city who represented a major and – compared to the civilians – superior spending power. The military stationed in Dura-Europos represented – despite the comments repeatedly made by the school of Rostovtzeff – an economical stimulation, whose presence by no means can be held responsible for an economic crisis.¹² The remarks made thus far demonstrate the important role of Dura-Europos as a significant economic centre of the middle Euphrates region, which played a major role especially in local and regional trade.

The discussion of Dura-Europos's role in long-distance trade, however, is still surrounded by controversy. Most scholars can agree on the usage of the category 'caravan city', introduced by Rostovtzeff,¹³ which has been otherwise generally dismissed.¹⁴ Rostovtzeff's perception of Dura-Europos as a 'caravan city', whose prosperity was based mostly on the Palmyrene caravan trade since Hellenistic times and especially during the empire, was not only the guideline for the procedure and interpretation of the findings and discoveries made during excavations under his charge,¹⁵ it was also responsible for some disappointment on his part. Despite the city's basic fabric, which suggested a certain economic wealth, no other evidence for this or for the caravan trade could be found. This is especially relevant in the case of the texts of the Nebuchelos archive (which will be further analysed below), where there is no indication of the caravan trade.¹⁶ It is from here

⁸ Cf. Sartre (1991) 354; Schuol (2000) 389–90; Hartmann (2001) 55.

⁹ *GGM* I, 244–54. For discussions of this route see Chaumont (1984) and Gawlikowski (1988) 166.

¹⁰ Cf. Will (1988).

¹¹ For the general trend of demographic increase during the Roman empire, see Scheidel (2007) 47–9.

¹² Cf. Ruffing (2007) 406–7.

¹³ For the definition of 'caravan city', see Rostovtzeff (1932) 21; see also his enthusiastic description of Dura and its role in the long-distance trade, *ibid.* 105.

¹⁴ Cf. Millar (1998a).

¹⁵ Cf. Millar (1998b) 407–10.

¹⁶ Cf. Rostovtzeff and Welles (1931) 187–8; *Rep.* IV, 142–3.

that a very influential concept amongst researchers has originated, namely that the Roman soldiers stationed at Dura strangled the town's economy and were thus responsible for its economic decline¹⁷ – a concept that also coincides with Rostovtzeff's general depiction of the third-century crisis and the soldiers' role in it.¹⁸

However, Rostovtzeff's conceptions did not only have a great influence in this regard. Dura's significant role in long-distance trade, a cornerstone for Rostovtzeff's interpretation of the findings, is generally incorporated in modern research, even though no real evidence of any kind exists in the sources for the town's participation in the Palmyrene caravan trade to the Far East, and – as far as I am concerned – until now no proof of a caravan route or earth road connecting Dura with Palmyra has been found.¹⁹ The excavations at the Palmyra Gate also suggest that the caravan trade did not play an important role for Roman Dura.²⁰ Therefore the existence of trade relations between Dura and Palmyra has been postulated in modern research solely by *argumenta e silentio*,²¹ whereas the actual trade relations seem to have been only of marginal relevance. Even though long-distance trade had only an insignificant role at Dura-Europos, a connection to it existed via the Euphrates route, establishing a market for goods which were traded along this route into the *Imperium Romanum*.²²

The indubitable presence of Palmyrenes in Dura has been seen as evidence by those scholars who vehemently argue for the town's involvement in the Palmyrene caravan trade.²³ The long-distance trade to the Persian Gulf, and further on to India, has thus been marginalised, and instead the trade relationship between Dura and Palmyra, situated 220 km away, as well as the trade between Palmyra and Babylonia that was conducted in Dura, has been highlighted.²⁴

Some remarks should be made about the trade between Dura and Palmyra. First of all, it is not unproblematic to make the presence of Palmyrenes in Dura a main argument for the existence of this trade relationship, since there are different possible explanations for their presence. Furthermore,

¹⁷ See, e.g., Harmatta (1982–5) 45–6; Leisten (1997) 846.

¹⁸ Cf. Ruffing (2010).

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. Sommer (2005a) 305, 308 and 310–11; Mare (1995) 199; Dirven (1996) 40–1 and 43–6; Dirven (1999) 34–40; Winter (2007) 228 and 230–1.

²⁰ Cf. Leriche (1996) 248.

²¹ Cf. Dirven (1996) 43–6; ead. (1999) 34–40.

²² Cf. Ruffing (2000) 95–102. For silk found in Dura see Pfister and Bellinger (1945) 53–4; for the silk trade in general see Hübner (2001) esp. 86–121.

²³ But see Hauser (2007) 236, who is more cautious and speaks about a vivid 'Austausch' between Palmyra and Dura Europos.

²⁴ Cf. esp. Dirven (1996).

both the absence of any written source and the absence of any proof for a caravan route between the two cities have to be emphasised. The question of which goods might have been traded between the two cities is also not unproblematic. Since produce was mentioned in the famous so-called ‘Palmyrene tax law’,²⁵ it has been concluded that it was traded from Dura. According to references in the older tax law, Palmyra was dependent on the import of produce, whereas the tax law’s amendment gives clear evidence for a non-sustaining food production or at least one that did not meet needs.²⁶

It is worth looking at the specific passages of the tax law. It is well known that the tax law originated in AD 137 as an amendment by the *boulè* of Palmyra of the νόμος,²⁷ which possibly emerged in the 60s of the first century AD, that included, amongst other information, a detailed description of the new regulations for the collection of customary taxes on various goods. Whereas in the old version goods were only summarised and – if the goods were imported – charged with one denarius per shipment (G 187–9: τῶν βρωτῶν τὸ κα(τὰ) τὸν νόμον τοῦ γόμου δην[άριον] | εἴστημι πράσσεθαι, ὅταν ἔξωθεν τῶν ὁρων εἰσά[γῃται] | ἢ ἐξάγῃται / P 109–11²⁸), the new version gives a differentiated description, especially for olive oil (G 32–41 / P 23–8), but keeps the charge of one denarius for substantial goods like wine and grain (G 89–91 / P 59–60). Since an obvious need for new regulations concerning olive oil arose in the produce section, an increase of imports, or rather a balance of food production concerning the population of Palmyra that was always in deficit, is unlikely. Moreover, at least in the old νόμος, and also according to its amendment, Palmyrene villages were, after a mutual agreement, freed of these customs (G 189–91: τοὺς δὲ εἰς χωρία ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν [χω]ρίων κατακομίζοντας ἀτελεῖς εἶναι, ὡς καὶ συνεφώ|νησεν αὐτοῖς / P 112–13²⁹). Now, the import of grain to Palmyra should not be denied. On the contrary, with the number of inhabitants estimated by researchers to about 150,000 to 200,000 people,³⁰ Palmyra and the Palmyrene production area must have been in deficit. Still, the import of grain and other

²⁵ CIS II 3913. See now *TUAT NF* 1, pp. 281–92, with a German translation of the Greek and Palmyrenean text.

²⁶ Cf. Dirven (1996) 41–2. See also Teixidor (1984) 73, who argued that in Palmyra and the Palmyrène vines and cereals were not cultivated.

²⁷ For the possible date of the older tax law see Matthews (1984) 178, n. 23.

²⁸ ‘On edible stuffs I fix the tariff at one *denarius* per load, according to the regulations, whenever they are brought in from outside the boundaries or taken outside them’, translation Levick (2000) 99.

²⁹ ‘Those being conveyed to the local country districts or from them are to be free of dues, as was conceded to them’, translation Levick (2000) 99.

³⁰ Cf. Matthews (1984) 171.

produce from Dura, located 220 km away and not obviously connected via a trade route or road with Palmyra, seems out of the question, as for example Emesa was only 140 km away and connected to Palmyra by a road. Hence, the transaction costs for trading corn from Syria were much lower than the costs for trading corn from Dura. Thus the argument that a demand for produce induced trade between Dura and Palmyra, which would explain the presence of Palmyrenes in Dura, is not compelling.

Therefore, another argument concerning a connection of the Palmyrene caravan trade, namely the participation of Dura in the trade with Babylon, seems also unsound.³¹ The participation of Palmyrenes in the trade with Babylon, or rather with southern Mesopotamia, was surely conducted partly over land and partly by river; the river was most likely reached by caravans not at Dura, but further downstream at Ana, and left it again on the way back at Hit.³² Since Dura could only be reached with difficulty on the waterway, transaction costs for the Palmyrenes were obviously smaller when the caravans transported their goods from Babylon, or the Far East and India respectively, through Hit back to Palmyra, which is what is actually suggested in the caravan inscriptions. Incidentally, people would even travel from Palmyra to Nineveh via Ana.³³ No matter how these facts are considered, every detail indicates that Dura had access to goods from the lucrative southern and eastern trade routes via the Euphrates, but that a participation in the Palmyrene caravan trade is highly unlikely. It is much more likely that those who were economically active made use of the middle Euphrates region, which will now be shown with some more detailed illustrations of Dura's economic life.

In this context a sales contract of AD 180, by a certain Lysias, son of Lysias, grandson of Heliodoros, great-grandson of Aristonikos, should be mentioned. This Lysias was a citizen of Dura-Europos, although he lived in Nabagath where the Khabur joins the Euphrates. He sold half a vineyard and a slave to his brother Heliodoros, which were his part of the inheritance he shared with him. The price for the slave and the vineyard amounted to 500 drachmae of silver of the Tyrian currency (*P. Dura* 25).³⁴ The nomenclature of the two men between whom the contract was concluded gives an

³¹ Cf. Dirven (1996) 43–6.

³² Cf. Gawlikowski (1988) esp. 169. On the use of Kelleks for the downstream transport of goods, cf. Rollinger and Ruffing (2013) 410–11.

³³ Cf. Dalley (1995) 148.

³⁴ For the meaning of '500 drachmae of silver of the Tyrian currency' (*P. Dura* 25, 29–30) see Weiser and Cotton (2002) esp. 248: Tyrian currency means Roman denarii or Antichene staters or Cappadocian denominations, in short all types of coins used as real money, because they were numbered, not weighed.

impression of the Macedonian–Greek leading and upper class of Dura.³⁵ This sales contract clearly shows the economic interest of Dura's local elite in the lower Khabur region. A particularly interesting aspect is the toponym of the vineyard, which is 'the property of Baieris' (τῶν Βαείριος), a name of Arabic origin.³⁶ The conclusion that this Baieris is the original owner of the vineyard seems obvious.

Consequently, the stationing of Roman military at Dura led to soldiers and especially veterans, who were quite well-off in comparison, becoming landowners, as is documented in another sales contract from AD 227. Here we hear of Iulius Demetrius, a veteran of the *Cohors III Augusta Thracum*, who purchased land covered with trees from a certain Otarnaios, son of Abadabos, for 175 denarii. This sum included six hundred grapevines growing on the land. With this purchase Iulius Demetrius realigned his boundaries, since he is mentioned as the owner of the neighbouring vineyard in the sales contract (*P. Dura* 26). The purchased property was situated at a place called Sachare-da-hawarae, which is supposedly located 25 km upstream of the Khabur.³⁷ This sales contract deserves our attention as the seller of this property allegedly belonged to the Aramaic milieu. Furthermore, the contract demonstrates that the Euphrates had no static boundaries and that the surrounding regions were therefore used for economic gain, as was common practice.³⁸ Finally, the cohort's stationing in the Khabur valley is a compelling indication of the empire's interest in this region.³⁹

Another sales contract of AD 251 documents a very interesting deal between two ladies concerning the transaction of a deposit of 100 denarii. The deposittee of this sum is a certain Aurelia Gaia, daughter of Saturnilus, and the depositor a lady named Amaththabeile. Writing as representative of Aurelia Gaia was a man named Aurelios Theodoros, who was originally from Zeugma, but lived in Dura-Europos (*P. Dura* 30). It is apparent from the document's onomastic material that three social groups were involved in this business transaction. Both ladies are mentioned in the document as citizens of Dura, but Aurelia definitely belonged to the Roman milieu, whereas Amaththabeile – who neither gives a patronymic reference nor carries an Aurelian name – clearly belonged to the indigenous milieu.⁴⁰

³⁵ Cf. *P. Dura* 25, introduction at p. 127. For the prominence of this family and its importance as local elite, see Scholten (2005) 28–9; Sommer (2005a) 298.

³⁶ Cf. *P. Dura*, p. 132, n. 14.

³⁷ Cf. *P. Dura* 26, introduction at p. 134.

³⁸ Cf. Sommer (2005a) 48–54.

³⁹ Cf. Sommer (2005a) 326 and 310–11. For the geomorphology and the agricultural richness of the Khabur valley, see Tardieu (1990) 104–5.

⁴⁰ Cf. *P. Dura* 30, introduction at p. 150.

The sum of 100 denarii given in the document represents quite a significant spending power, compared for example to the above-mentioned property purchase in the Khabur region for 175 denarii. Unfortunately, prices and quantities of produce, which would allow for a more definite classification, remain generally unknown for Dura-Europos and the middle Euphrates region.⁴¹ Yet, by considering prices of approximately the same period (i.e. AD 268), which are recorded in graffiti on hill houses in Ephesos, some comparison can be made. There, the price of bread amounted to 15 *assaria* (SEG XLIX 1484). However, keeping in mind both the differences in prices in general, and the completely different circumstances of Ephesos and Dura in particular, a direct comparison of prices is impossible.⁴² Still, those prices would lead to the assumption that 100 denarii, even in the Euphrates region, would have covered everyday expenses, at least for produce, for a long period of time. A slightly different situation presents itself when the known prices for fabrics in Dura are taken into consideration. For purchasing a piece of clothing, a significant amount of these 100 denarii would have been needed. A δελματική, meaning a tunic with sleeves, would have cost between 17½ and 60 denarii in Dura in the first half of the third century.⁴³ We thus have to assume that a greater part of Dura's inhabitants, i.e. persons like Amaththabeile, were in the best of circumstances only able to buy one piece of clothing each year.⁴⁴ Ladies like Aurelia Marcellina, a widow who in her prenuptial agreement of AD 232 mentions clothing worth 445 denarii and, amongst other valuables, a dowry of 750 denarii (P. Dura 30), were considerably wealthier.⁴⁵ The detailed description does not only demonstrate the value of clothing, but also goes to show that belonging to the Roman military milieu, which Aurelia Marcellina most likely did, could lead to considerable wealth.

The documents mentioned so far only highlight certain aspects of economic life in Dura and its surroundings, but a series of graffiti from the 'House of Archives' gives a profound insight into the economic behaviour of a man named Aurelios Nebuchelos.⁴⁶ Nebuchelos was most likely a member of the local elite who gained citizenship by means of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* and who was an inhabitant of Dura.⁴⁷ His social

⁴¹ Cf. Ruffing (2002).

⁴² For the regional diversity of prices see Drexhage (1988).

⁴³ Cf. Ruffing (2002) 40–1.

⁴⁴ Cf. Drexhage, Konen and Ruffing (2002) 180.

⁴⁵ On clothing as part of dowries, cf. Droß-Krüpe and Wagner (2013).

⁴⁶ For the Nebuchelos archive, see *Rep.* IV, 79–145; Rostovtzeff and Welles (1931); Yon (2007) 420–3.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Rep.* IV, 137.

background in itself thus makes him a very interesting historical figure. His name reveals an ongoing relationship between Dura and Babylonia even during the imperial period.⁴⁸ But Nebuchelos is even more interesting since there is some evidence to suggest that he was connected to the Greek–Macedonian elite in Dura via his son-in-law Alexander.⁴⁹ Prosopographic examination of the archive's graffiti shows that Nebuchelos was connected to several local and Graeco-Roman individuals.⁵⁰ The location of the 'House of Archives', which was probably owned by Nebuchelos, at the intersection of the *cardo* and the *decumanus* also shows Nebuchelos's presumably higher social status. He had developed an outstandingly diversified business activity, which must have ranged over the whole middle Euphrates region. Since he did own farmland, he must have been actively involved in a farming business. One graffito records the receipt of a rent of 20 *artabai* of barley.⁵¹ Moreover, Nebuchelos was active in the business of sheep farming, since the archive's texts record the selling of fleece and the proceeds being shared with business partners.⁵² If Nebuchelos's involvement in farming was rather marginal, the graffiti show that he was much more active as a trader. Apparently, he invested significant sums in his commercial transactions – in one case not less than 2,120 denarii – which he invested in a commercial transaction alongside his partners who invested much smaller sums.⁵³ The kind of business Nebuchelos was investing in here is of course not precisely described, but it is made clear in other parts of the archive. For example, he was involved in the selling of old wine to Dura and Banabe, and he also traded bread, wheat, barley and wine in Soura.⁵⁴ Yet his attention was especially focussed on trading in fabrics, a business which he did not only conduct in Dura, but expanded to Aphphadana.⁵⁵ Nebuchelos's business activities were of course not limited to farming and trading, as he was apparently also involved in pawnbroking. However, only small sums were lent, for example eight denarii.⁵⁶

All in all, the historical tradition of Dura-Europos provides a vivid impression of the city's economic life. As mentioned above, this is due to Dura's central position in the middle Euphrates region. Members of the local elite, as well as veterans of the Roman army, took up the role of

⁴⁸ For the contacts between Dura and Babylonia, see Dalley (1995) 139.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Rep.* IV, 137–8.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Rep.* IV, 138–9.

⁵¹ *SEG* VII 394 = *Rep.* IV, 129–30, no. 258 = *CRAI* (1931) 184, no. 14.

⁵² Cf. Ruffing (2000) 80–1.

⁵³ *SEG* VII 381 = *Rep.* IV, 120, no. 241 = *CRAI* (1931), 177–8, no. 6.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ruffing (2000) 82.

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.* 82–90.

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.* 90–3.

landowners both here and in the Khabur valley. The trading activities of the inhabitants of Dura were clearly also rooted in the middle Euphrates region; a direct participation in long-distance trade cannot be concluded from the available sources. Yet, the documents clearly show how all kinds of social and ethnic groups interacted in economic conduct, and the Nebuchelos archive is a vivid example of this. Business transactions and the necessity – resulting from the rules of economic conduct – to interact economically with members of different cultures to the benefit of both parties had an important impact on cultural contact in general. This is shown also and, indeed, especially in the middle Euphrates region, with its metropolis Dura-Europos. The Roman military obviously played a significant role in the town's economic life, as its mere presence stimulated the economy. Additionally, the settlement of veterans did not only lead to an eventual 'Romanisation' of the region,⁵⁷ but also created a consumer class in Dura and its surroundings which certainly stimulated the economy. Therefore, the economy played a major role in the field of cultural contact and the processes of acculturation. Yet it will be a task of ongoing research to analyse these processes further.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Cf. Sommer (2005a) 326–8.

⁵⁸ See now Ruffing (2014).

Frank Brown at Europos-Doura

SUSAN B. DOWNEY

Frank Brown joined the Yale–French Academy excavations at Europos-Doura in 1932–3, after being awarded the PhD from Yale and spending two years as a fellow in the American Academy in Rome.¹ He worked extensively in the temple of Artemis, which had been partially excavated by Franz Cumont, and was largely responsible for the excavations in the agora,² as well as the temples of Adonis, of Zeus Theos, and of Zeus Megistos. He became field director for the ninth and tenth seasons (1935–7). Commendably, he and other members of the Yale team promptly published preliminary reports on the excavations in the series *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Preliminary Report on the First (etc.) Season of Work* (Yale, 1929–52). Unfortunately, however, it seems that Brown lost interest in Europos-Doura, so that he never published full reports on much of his work there. Three of the four examples that I will use in this paper (the temple of Zeus Megistos, and the paintings in the temples of Adonis and of Zeus Theos) belong to this category.

In much of his work, Brown proposed detailed reconstructions of both buildings and paintings. In some cases, the evidence for these reconstructions is rather minimal, leading to questions about their validity. In this article I will discuss four of these reconstructions, two architectural and two of wall paintings in temples. These are: the citadel palace; the first phase of the temple of Zeus Megistos; and the paintings in the naos of the temples of Adonis and of Zeus Theos.

The Citadel Palace

The citadel palace was excavated during the second season of the Yale–French Academy at Europos-Doura (1928–9). A short report on the excavation was initially published by Maurice Pillet, the French director of the

¹ I have chosen to use the designation of the site recently adopted by the Mission Franco-Syrienne d'Europos-Doura.

² *Rep. IX.1, The Agora and Bazaar.*

excavations.³ There are also brief discussions by M. I. Rostovtzeff⁴ and Ann Perkins.⁵ Pillet published only an actual state plan [PLATE XLVII], whereas Rostovtzeff and Perkins reproduced a restored plan drawn by Frank Brown [PLATE XLVIII]. My observations on the site in 1985 led me to question Brown's reconstruction. Since these observations have been published in detail,⁶ I will provide only a brief summary here.

The citadel at Europos-Doura is located on a hill overlooking the Euphrates, one of the highest points of the site. There is evidence of two phases. The earlier of the two buildings probably dates to the early years of the colony, and the second phase probably also dates to the period of the Seleucid colony. The full plan of the building is not recoverable, since a large portion of it apparently fell into the Euphrates at some point. Pillet's plan of the surviving portion of the second phase suggests a structure consisting of two sections. The western section is centered on a peristyle court with a single row of rooms on its west side (but apparently no entrance on that side), and a double set of rooms on the north side of the peristyle court. The colonnaded court is only partially preserved, and the entire southern portion of the building is missing. The western section, which faces the river, is separated by a corridor 2.12 m wide from the exiguous remains of a northeastern section; the rest of this portion of the building has fallen into the Euphrates. The remains of this section of the building consist of a fragment of a north-south wall and two partially preserved segments of east-west walls separated by a narrow corridor (0.75 m wide) with buttresses on the interior walls. To propose a structure with a row of three *iwans* on the basis of three fragmentary walls on the northern side of the building seems extremely hazardous.

When Brown, Rostovtzeff, and Perkins wrote, the chronology of buildings in Mesopotamia (primarily Hatra and Assur) and Iran (Masjid-i-Solaiman and Bard-è Néchandeh) that have *iwans* was uncertain. The building at Hatra now known to be a temple of Shamash was considered a "palace" by the German excavators and dated to the first century BC. Subsequent work has demonstrated not only that it was in fact a temple of Shamash, but also that it was under construction in AD 112 [PLATE XLIX].⁷ The earliest form of the building over the old Assur temple at Assur probably dates to the first century BC and originally had only two *iwans*; a third was added later.⁸ The *Freitreppenbau* at that city is very badly destroyed,

³ M. Pillet in *Rep.* II, 13–15, pls 4, 29, 32.2.

⁴ Rostovtzeff (1935), 217–18; id. (1938a) 46–7, fig. 9.

⁵ Perkins (1973) 14–15, fig. 3.

⁶ Downey (1985) 111–16; ead. (1988b).

⁷ Downey (1985) 115–16, n. 20.

⁸ Andrae (1967) 73–88.

and the restoration as a two-storied, triple *iwān* structure is based on very little evidence. On the other hand, if Walter Andrae's reconstruction is correct, a structure with three arched openings overlay the old Assur temple. This does indeed look a lot like Brown's reconstruction of the eastern part of the citadel palace. The reconstruction of the Assur palace with *iwāns* on four sides of a courtyard also seems reasonable.⁹ In my view, the remains of the citadel palace at Europos-Doura are so fragmentary that it is simply too hazardous to propose a reconstruction.

The First Phase of the Temple of Zeus Megistos

Brown's reconstruction of the earliest phase of the temple of Zeus Megistos provides my second example. It is now clear that his reconstruction of what he considered the earliest phase of the temple of Zeus Megistos was based on a serious misinterpretation of the evidence provided by the actual remains. As I have published a brief report of my new interpretation of the phases in the temple of Zeus Megistos in the first volume of *Europos-Doura, Varia*,¹⁰ I will be brief here.

Excavations conducted in the temple of Zeus Megistos between 1992 and 2002 have led to a drastic revision of the chronology proposed by Frank Brown and previously accepted by me.¹¹ Briefly, Brown had proposed that the first building in block C4 was a temple of Hellenistic date, consisting of a courtyard with a Doric propylon, within which stood a roughly square temple with three sanctuary units and a monumental altar on the axis of the central, largest sanctuary. He restored the three sanctuaries as having arched entrances, thus a triple *iwān* façade [PLATE L]. This of course would have been totally unlike the usual Greek temple, and Brown characterized it as a Hellenistic adaptation of an old Iranian temple type. He further stated that this first temple was destroyed ruthlessly, probably in the course of the Parthian invasion of ca. 114 BC, and replaced by one that utilized the type of plan normal for temples of the Parthian and Roman periods at Europos-Doura.¹² Already in 1985 I had expressed reservations about the arched entrances, while accepting his interpretation of the façade with three openings.¹³

⁹ *Ibid.* 25–53, pls 9–14.

¹⁰ Downey (2012).

¹¹ Ead. (1988a).

¹² *Ibid.* 79–86.

¹³ Ead. (1985). It is now clear that Brown's entire plan and reconstruction of the supposed Hellenistic phase of the temple was based on the misinterpretation of early walls in the block. See ead. (2000) 158–62.

It is now apparent that even the evidence on which this idea is based is open to question. Briefly, Brown argued that the original temple precinct was roughly square and was divided into a courtyard with a propylon that occupied roughly two-thirds of the sacred space, with three sanctuaries at the back. Brown argued that a north–south cross wall in this court served as the front wall of the three sanctuary units and that two east–west walls created a large central sanctuary and two subsidiary ones. It is now clear that the north–south row of gypsum ashlar that Brown used as the front wall of his sanctuary unit was not a wall at all, but rather part of pavement of a court. The remains of this part of the pavement consist of a row of two north–south headers with one row of stretchers between. This segment is 3.10 m wide, far too wide for the front wall of a sanctuary building. Oddly, this segment of gypsum blocks is separated from the pavement to the east and the presumed pavement of a court to the west. It appears that the Yale excavators carried out a sounding just to the east of the eastern row of headers, thus removing the pavement if there was one, but there is no indication of the reason for the lack of paving blocks to the west. The wall segments that Brown used to create the western foundations for the naos are discontinuous, though his plans do not indicate this, and the east wall of the naos posited in his reconstruction in his reconstruction does not bond with the southern north–south wall. Furthermore, and crucially, the row of headers and stretchers mentioned above is at a lower level than the pavement of the court to the east, whereas Brown considered it part of the same building phase.¹⁴

The only evidence that the block housed a temple dedicated to Zeus Megistos is an inscription dated to AD 169/70, recording the dedication of various architectural elements to Zeus Megistos by one Seleukos, *strategos* and *epistates* of the city.¹⁵ This leaves open the possibility that the early remains in the block were not those of a temple. Because of the complicated history of the structures in this block, Brown's reconstructions were necessarily based on the interpretation of fragmentary and discontinuous remains, and my excavations have demonstrated that his interpretations of the earliest remains were based on misunderstandings of the incomplete evidence. While much about the temple of Zeus Megistos remains enigmatic, my work has helped to clarify the evidence for the successive architectural phases in the block.¹⁶

¹⁴ Information from Pascal Arnaud and Sebastien Appert.

¹⁵ C. B. Welles, in Frye et al. (1955) 139–42, no. 6; Downey (1988a) 93–6.

¹⁶ I owe a special debt of gratitude to Pierre Leriche, director of the Mission Franco-Syrienne d'Europos-Doura, for including me as a member of the mission and supplying both intellectual advice and workmen. Many other scholars and architects have also contributed

The actual state plan by Pascal Lebouteiller and Sebastien Appert well illustrates the complex history of the block [PLATE LI]. Unfortunately, there is essentially no evidence other than the relations of walls to one another to aid us in the dating of the phases of the temple. The pottery that was found in Brown's excavations has been lost, and the small sherds that were found in sealed contexts during my excavations do not aid in establishing chronology.¹⁷ There are other problems with Brown's interpretation of the phases of the temple of Zeus Megistos, but the above example will illustrate the issues. A brief summary of my current understanding of the phases in this building has appeared in *EDV I*¹⁸ and a full report on the excavations is in preparation.

The Paintings in the Temple of Adonis

My other two examples are wall paintings on the back walls of the naoi of two deities, those of Adonis and of Zeus Theos. Both date to the second century AD, and both were excavated by Frank Brown. The temple attributed to Adonis was published in the preliminary report of the eighth season.¹⁹ Probably because it was built over pre-existing houses, the plan is unusual for Europos-Doura. The temple is long and narrow, and the principal sanctuary unit is at the north end of the temple [PLATE XXIV], whereas in most temples the principal sanctuary is oriented east. There is a second sanctuary unit at the south end of the building. In neither case is the deity of the sanctuary named. The attribution of the temple to Adonis is based primarily on two inscriptions from the temple, the dedication of portico 49 and room 50, and another inscription found in front of the altar to the north of chapel 6.²⁰ As we will see, the painted cult image on the back wall of the naos is consistent with an attribution of the temple to Adonis. The inscriptions and the fragmentary painted image clearly influenced Brown's interpretation that the temple was dedicated to Adonis, even though the inscriptions were not found in the sanctuary unit.

to my understanding of the complex stratigraphy of the site. I acknowledge particularly the architects who have drawn the plans of all or part of the building (Jean Humbert, Corinne Licoppe, Pascal Lebouteiller and Sebastien Appert). I have benefited greatly from discussions with members of the Mission Franco-Syrienne d'Europos-Doura, as well as with visitors. All responsibility for the interpretation of the evidence is mine.

¹⁷ Information from François Alabe.

¹⁸ Downey (2012).

¹⁹ *Rep.* VII/VIII, 135–79.

²⁰ F. E. Brown in *ibid.* 169–72.

Brown assumed that the fragmentary paintings fallen from the west half of the rear wall followed a scheme normal for Europos-Doura: a deity and worshipers [PLATE LII].²¹ As restored, the painting consisted of a group of four bearded men clad in the usual dress that men of Europos-Doura wore for official occasions (a long sleeved tunic partially covered by a mantle, with H-shaped designs on the tunic). The reconstruction shows two of them officiating at an altar, with two others flanking them. The object of worship is shown as smaller as the bearded sacrificants; he had a bouffant hairdo and wears Parthian dress. He is shown standing on a base, but Brown admits that he might equally well have stood on a globe, like the deities in the Otes fresco in the temple of the Palmyrene gods.²² In the drawing Brown also shows that the painted lintel above the worshipers rises in an arch above the god. This reconstruction is plausible, of course, but according to Brown there are some two hundred fragments of painting.²³ Obviously, only a few are used in this reconstruction. Furthermore, there is no indication of the subject or size of the remaining fragments, and it will clearly be necessary to study the originals in New Haven.

The Paintings in the Temple of Zeus Theos

The temple of Zeus Theos is identified by an inscription, of August/September AD 114, on the lintel on the door that opens to the street.²⁴ Though the inscription is quite fragmentary, Seleukos, son of Theomnestos, can be reliably identified as a member of the Durene aristocracy on the basis of the dedicatory inscription of the large two-room chapel erected by a man of that name in AD 120–3.²⁵ The naos paintings are unusually well preserved. There are worshipers in three registers on the sides.²⁶ The painting on the rear wall is unfortunately very fragmentary.²⁷ The surviving fragments show four horses moving to the right, two partially preserved figures of Nike, one moving right and one left, and an actual base projecting from the wall, with the tip of a very large foot in a painted Parthian shoe resting on it. Next to the foot was apparently a portion of a

²¹ *Ibid.* 158–63, fig. 44, pls 19–20.

²² *Ibid.* 158, with reference to Cumont (1926) pls 50 and 55.

²³ *Rep.* VII/VIII, 158.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 212f., no. 886.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 212–15, nos 886–8.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 202–8, frontispiece and pls 22–4. I will not discuss the paintings on the side walls in this article.

²⁷ Only a drawing of the back wall is published, though photographs of some of the figures are illustrated.

felloes, according to Brown. Only the tip of the toe remains, and it is poised on the base that projects from the rear wall. Brown notes that the boot corresponds in detail to that of the (mostly destroyed) cult image in the temple of the Palmyrene gods. On the basis of this very slim evidence, Brown reconstructed without hesitation a large figure of a god in Parthian dress, nimbate and carrying a spear and a globe, standing in front of a chariot drawn by four horses. He restored two Nikes crowning the god and three human-sized figures at the god's right.²⁸ This is obviously a quite audacious restoration of the painted cult image, based on very slim evidence. Brown implicitly compared the boot to that worn by the god in the cult painting in the temple of the Palmyrene gods at Europos-Doura. It also seems clear that the entire image of the god is modeled on that of the central god in one of the paintings on the north wall of room K of that same temple.²⁹ Again, as with the painting on the rear wall of the naos of the temple of Adonis, it will be important to check the fragmentary wall paintings from the temple of Zeus Theos.³⁰

Conclusion

These four examples illustrate clearly Brown's tendency to restore both architecture and paintings at Europos-Doura, based on very slim evidence. This is especially true in the case of the two buildings and the rear wall of the temple of Zeus Theos. My examination of the remains of both architecture and paintings shows that one must be very careful in using Brown's reconstructions of both architecture and painting as evidence for architecture and painting at Europos-Doura.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 196–202. *Ibid.* pl. 25 is a partial painting of the wall fragments by Herbert J. Gute.

²⁹ Cumont (1926) 122–34, pls 55–8.

³⁰ In this case Brown does not indicate the number of surviving fragments of the paintings.

The historical development of Dura-Europos was complex and multicultural, influenced by the Greek, the Parthian, and the Roman civilizations, among others. Excavated remains of parchments, papyri, and carved inscriptions attest that numerous languages were spoken and understood in the ancient city, including Greek, Latin, Palmyrenean, Hebrew, Hatrean, Safaitic, and Pahlavi. The coexistent religions in the city reflect an equally intricate cultural environment, including temples dedicated to Greek, Roman, and Palmyrene gods (and assimilations of these), as well as separate places of worship for the Christian and Jewish communities. Upon being besieged by the Sasanians in the third century AD, Roman soldiers garrisoned at Dura-Europos opted to strengthen the western fortification wall with a huge earthen embankment, a strategy that was ultimately unsuccessful. The attackers created a complex series of siege mines under the wall, near Tower 19, and recent re-analysis of excavation records suggests that they utilized chemical warfare in their attack, burning naphtha and sulphur to create fumes that overcame the Roman soldiers defending the mines.¹

Once the city's defenses were breached around AD 256, Dura-Europos was conquered and subsequently abandoned. The fact that the site was never reoccupied or rebuilt on a major scale is a significant factor in the extraordinary preservation of its artefacts and architectural remains. The buildings along the western wall that had been buried by the embankment were particularly well preserved, including even the paintings that decorated their interiors. These buildings include a synagogue painted with biblical scenes (something surprising to many scholars, given the Jewish prohibition against figural images in religious art); one of the earliest Christian house churches, with the earliest known baptistery; and a place of worship for the mystery religion of Mithraism. Such discoveries fundamentally altered understanding of religious practice in antiquity.

¹ Originally discussed, in *The New York Times* of 28 April 1935, as '256 A.D. strategy shown by tunnel: Yale excavators at Dura find one of earliest examples of military science'. Cf. now James (2009–10); id. (2011a); id. (2011b).

Dura-Europos lay virtually unseen and undisturbed in the Syrian desert for centuries after its abandonment. Its architecture, art, religion, and people are known to modern scholars largely through the results of a series of excavation campaigns sponsored by Yale University and the French Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in the 1920s and 1930s [PLATE LIII]. A great deal of new, collaborative scholarship on Dura-Europos has been undertaken in recent years by the Mission Franco-Syrienne d'Europos-Doura, directed by Pierre Leriche, and by many other international scholars. These projects have resulted in numerous publications, including books, articles, and doctoral dissertations, as well as public lectures, papers, symposia, and sessions at academic conferences.²

Interest in Dura-Europos continues to be as intense as ever. The Yale University Art Gallery fields requests almost daily from people wishing to view the objects from the early excavations now in its collection, as well as the archival records that are also part of the Gallery's Dura-Europos holdings. Visits by students and scholars, many of whom come from other countries specifically to study Dura-Europos material at Yale, are continuously accommodated by Gallery staff. The addition of the excavation archives to the ARTstor digital library in the summer of 2009 was a significant step forward in the Gallery's long-term plan to make all of the Dura-Europos material as widely accessible as possible.³

Much of the Gallery's Dura-Europos collection is currently in off-site storage, due to the fragile nature of many of the objects, their need for conservation treatment, and their sensitivity to variations in climate. The Gallery makes every effort to accommodate scholars and students who wish to view and study this material; installations staff make the objects accessible, and curators in the Department of Ancient Art accompany small, pre-arranged groups to see the objects. It is an ongoing goal of the department to make the collection more easily accessible to a wider audience on a permanent basis.

The artefacts excavated at Dura-Europos in the 1920s and 1930s were divided between Yale and the National Museum of Damascus, in a *part-age* agreement that is preserved in the Gallery's Dura-Europos archives. Those sent to Yale were subsequently placed on view where they were seen by countless visitors in the following decades. In the early 1980s, a special exhibition focusing on Dura-Europos was organized by Susan

² For further details, see the introduction to this volume.

³ See www.artstor.org/index.shtml. To access the data on ARTstor, individuals must be affiliated with a participating non-profit institution (university, college, museum, public library, or K-12 school).

Matheson, the Molly and Walter Bareiss Curator of Ancient Art: “Life in an Eastern Province: the Roman Fortress at Dura-Europos” (March 27, 1982 through August 15, 1984).⁴ Due to the popularity of the exhibition and the subject matter, many of the pieces remained on view even after the show closed. The Gallery has also loaned Dura-Europos objects to other institutions for exhibition. A number of painted ceiling tiles from the synagogue, for instance, have recently been on long-term loan to the Jewish Museum in New York City, and a group of objects, including sculptures, textiles, and additional synagogue tiles, have been on display in the Ancient Near Eastern galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In 2008 Carol Snow joined the staff of the Yale University Art Gallery as the museum’s first Objects Conservator. This, together with the development of a new conservation facility and the renovation of the gallery, finally made it feasible to treat and display the objects from Dura-Europos in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Many significant artefacts from the collection were featured in the exhibition “Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity” at the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College (February 5 through June 5, 2011). This exhibition was a collaborative project organized by the Yale University Art Gallery and the McMullen Museum of Art, co-curated by the present author and Gail Hoffman, Associate Professor of Fine Arts and Classical Studies at Boston College, and made possible with support from Boston College and the Patrons of the McMullen Museum. The objects exhibited reflect the many subgroups within Dura’s population – Syrians (especially Palmyrenes), Greeks, Roman soldiers, conscripted “barbarians” from northern Europe, Jews, and Christians – and illuminate the deep cultural interactions common in the ancient world. A scholarly catalogue edited by the curators and published by the McMullen Museum of Art accompanied the exhibition and included essays about Dura-Europos by renowned international scholars.

In 2012 the Yale University Art Gallery opened its renovated and reinstalled galleries of ancient art, including the Mary and James Ottaway Gallery, a major new permanent installation devoted to Dura-Europos. The thematic display focusses on the discovery of the site, its extraordinary level of preservation, and its historical and archaeological significance, and includes both physical and virtual reconstructions of major monuments. The archives and field records that are also an integral element of the Gallery’s Dura-Europos collection allow the works of art to be presented in their full historical context and to be appreciated not only as objects

⁴ Kiefer and Matheson (1982). A general book was published to accompany the exhibition: Matheson (1982).

of individual aesthetic value but also as artefacts of an important cultural crossroads. The installation includes a newly-designed computer kiosk featuring reconstructions and renderings of the site and its major monuments, as well as excavation photographs from the Gallery's Dura-Europos archives (described in more detail below).

The fact that many of the Dura-Europos artefacts required conservation treatment before they can be exhibited has been addressed not only by Carol Snow's arrival at Yale, but also by a large new conservation facility at Yale's recently acquired West Campus. Purchased from Bayer Corporation in 2007, the new campus is located seven miles from downtown New Haven and includes twenty buildings on 136 sprawling acres. Within the 1.6 million square feet of research, office, and warehouse space, Yale's museums and libraries have designed a collaborative plan for conservation, storage, and digitization that will benefit collections across the university.⁵ Conservation laboratories at West Campus now allow for research projects involving technical analysis of the artefacts, their structure, and their composition. Since moving into the designated space in 2009, several major projects involving Dura-Europos have been undertaken, including the conservation of the wall paintings from the Christian baptistery and the reconstruction of the mithraeum.

Christian Building Paintings

The wall paintings of the Christian building were uncovered by archaeologists at Dura-Europos in January and February of 1932 [PLATE LIV].⁶ Field director Clark Hopkins marveled at the discovery: "Our camp was awestruck by the extraordinary preservation of the Christian murals dated more than three-quarters of a century before Constantine recognized Christianity in 312."⁷ Preparations for the removal of the wall paintings and their shipment to Yale began almost immediately. Their treatment was begun in March 1932; French restorer Émile Bacquet sprayed the surface of the paintings with cellulose nitrate (now known to be an unstable material) before backing them with plaster reinforced with wood strips and hemp fibers. Removal of the paintings was completed in November 1932, approximately eleven months after they were first revealed. This delay, and the accompanying exposure to air and moisture, may have exacerbated

⁵ See www.yale.edu/westcampus/arts_core.html.

⁶ Many thanks go to Carol Snow for the information on the paintings from the Christian building presented in the next few paragraphs.

⁷ Hopkins (1979) 91.

the deterioration of the paintings, which would eventually require several post-excavation conservation campaigns.

Although preserved by the earthen embankment heaped against the western wall during the final siege of the city, the wall paintings of the Christian building also suffered severe damage from the salts present in their burial environment. Through processes of dissolution and recrystallization, these salts migrated to the surfaces of the paintings and caused them to flake with significant loss of pigment. Even the coating applied in the field, meant to help stabilize the surface, added to their eventual deterioration. When the paintings arrived at Yale, they were installed in the gallery in a full-scale reconstruction, which remained on view until a restructuring of the museum's gallery space in 1977. This important installation became known world-wide and has been referenced in hundreds of classrooms and publications by students and scholars working on Dura-Europos and early Christianity. Nevertheless, the condition of the wall paintings remained extremely unstable.

The paintings were analyzed in 1932 by George L. Stout of Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum conservation laboratory. The laboratory, established just a few years earlier in 1928, was the first of its kind in the United States. Stout cited three sources of the paintings' "mutilation":⁸ (1) the coating applied in the field; (2) their fractured and dislocated structure; and (3) soluble salts. Analysis of the paintings found no extant ancient binder, such as vegetable or animal glue, that would have helped prevent loss of pigment. In an effort to stop the flaking of the paint, the paintings were sprayed with a new synthetic material, polyvinyl acetate. This consolidant was applied in the 1930s and again in the 1940s.

By 1975 the paintings remained so unstable that a drastic *strappo* detachment, a technique developed in Italy for the removal of fresco paintings, was deemed necessary. For this procedure, undertaken by Gayle Weaver, a conservator at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, cotton fabric was applied to the front of the paintings with animal glue. The glue dried and shrank, which pulled the paint layer away from the ancient plaster substrate. Next, the peeled paint layer was backed with a doughy mixture of sand, marble flour, fumed silica, and chopped glass bound in acrylic emulsion. After this backing dried, warm water was used to remove the cotton fabric from the front of the paintings, and areas of missing paint were painted a neutral color so as to be less distracting to viewers. A secondary support was then applied to the reverse using polyester resin, woven fiberglass, and aluminum strips. Finally, the front surfaces

⁸ G. L. Stout, unpublished record of examination, 1933, Dura-Europos Collection, YUAG.

were sprayed with acrylic resin.⁹ In 1982 the paintings were treated yet again, by conservator Carroll Wales of Oliver Brothers, Inc. in Boston, MA, who used beeswax and heat to set down curling animal glue and flaking paint.¹⁰

The most recent conservation of the paintings, undertaken at the Yale University Art Gallery in 2010, made use of new solvent mixtures to set down flaking paint and to remove some excess glue, fill material, and coatings from the previous treatments in order to stabilize the paintings and make them more suitable for exhibition. Working in collaboration with curators, the conservators used excavation photographs [PLATE LV] and enhanced digital-imaging technology to return the paintings as much as possible to their excavated appearance. Inpainting was done with reversible water-based paints and dry pigments containing modern chemical elements, such as cadmium, to make them clearly distinguishable from the iron oxide earth pigments used in antiquity [PLATE LVI]. Now restored, these paintings are on view at the Gallery along with complete documentation of their treatment and the archaeological evidence used in the conservation process.

Mithraeum Reconstruction

Another major Dura-Europos project completed at West Campus is the physical reconstruction of the ancient city's shrine to Mithras [PLATE LVII].¹¹ The wall paintings and limestone cult reliefs from the mithraeum are a significant feature of the Gallery's Dura-Europos collection and have been on display several times since their relocation to Yale in 1935. Installed in a full-scale reconstruction on the third floor of the Gallery's Swartwout building upon arrival, the mithraeum remained a dominant feature of the space until 1977, when the entire installation was moved to the lower level of the museum's Louis Kahn building. There, the mithraeum paintings and reliefs were set into the walls of a new reconstruction very similar in design to the earlier one [PLATE XXX]. In 1982 a detailed condition report of the mithraeum was written by Christie Cunningham, painting conservator. The reconstruction remained in place until the Gallery moved out of the building in 2002, in preparation for its renovation.¹²

⁹ Gayle Weaver, conservation report, 1975, Dura-Europos Collection, YUAG.

¹⁰ Carroll Wales, letter to Susan Matheson, 1984, Dura-Europos Collection, YUAG.

¹¹ I would like to thank Peter Cohen, Clarkson Crolius, Christina Czap, and Carol Snow, all of the YUAG, for their work on this reconstruction and for the information presented here.

¹² The disassembly and move of the mithraeum reconstruction was overseen by Sarah Nunberg, contract objects conservator, and Burrus Harlow, manager of installations.

The 1977 reconstruction of the Dura-Europos mithraeum incorporated the paintings and reliefs into a structure made of 2 × 4-inch lumber and plywood, joined by plaster, wire lath, and copper wire. The plaster was used to reconstruct missing sections, frequently covering the edges of the original wall paintings. The disassembly of the reconstruction in 2002 was carefully documented with descriptive text and photographs, and the paintings and reliefs were removed from the supporting structure and placed in off-site storage.

In 2009 the Gallery began developing plans for a major reinstallation of the Dura-Europos collection, including a reconstruction of the mithraeum as a focal point. The initial concept was to rebuild the 1977 structure. A team was formed including staff from several departments: curatorial, conservation, installations, and exhibition design. This interdepartmental collaboration proved to be instrumental in creating an innovative and flexible design that would balance the requirements of this complex project.

The next step was to bring together the fragments of the mithraeum and examine their structure, condition, and completeness. This was made possible by the large new facilities available for storage and conservation at Yale's West Campus. A full-scale mock-up using wood and cardboard was created, starting with the ancient fragments themselves and placing strong emphasis on the documentary evidence from the 1930s excavations, including numerous photographs and drawings. An old excavation drawing of the shrine upon discovery was particularly arresting and ultimately provided a new vision [PLATE LVIII]. In many ways, the evolving collaboration reflected the convergence of talent that had existed in the field at Dura-Europos in the 1930s, where archaeologists, artists, architects, and photographers worked together to document their processes of discovery and treatment.

The Gallery's reinstallation team strove to design a new reconstruction of the mithraeum with minimal structural or aesthetic fills, where the ancient fragments would be highlighted and appreciated in their own right [PLATE LIX]. The space would be fully accessible, not roped off as in the earlier reconstruction. Security experts were consulted in order to ensure safety for the objects as well as for visitors. The resulting inviting layout allows for a more intimate experience of the art that has garnered such interest among scholars and the international community.

Once the team reached a collective vision for the project, various structural components and techniques were considered in order to best create the desired effect in displaying and protecting the ancient works of art. An arch-shaped armature was designed using plywood, built up in a

brick overlay pattern for extra strength. An extra piece of wood running along the interior edge of the arch provides reinforcement and allows for the placement of connecting rungs from which the ancient fragments can be hung. The surface of the arch is covered with PVC foam and plaster. The wall painting fragments, which received a wooden lattice as part of their backing during excavation, are mounted to custom plywood backers with zip ties and/or wire. The limestone reliefs are installed on a frame behind the arch. This frame is an essential structural element, since the smaller of the two reliefs cannot safely bear the weight of the larger, heavier piece above it. All materials for the installation were carefully selected for their museum-grade qualities, degree of rigidity, and strength. The end result is a reconstruction that highlights the extraordinary preservation of the Dura-Europos mithraeum and the quality of the artwork, while giving visitors a true sense of the space in which Mithras was worshiped at ancient Dura-Europos.¹³

Technology Project

Another aspect of the exhibition of the Dura-Europos artefacts at Yale involves a technology project incorporating descriptive text, excavation photographs, and 3-D architectural reconstructions of the site. This project has several goals. Installed on a kiosk in the museum, it now gives visitors the opportunity to learn more about the artefacts they see and to understand their historical and archaeological contexts. Reconstructions of the site's architecture, with wall paintings shown *in situ*, give the public a way to experience the ancient space beyond what can be presented in the Gallery itself. The information is also made available online through the Gallery's website (www.artgallery.yale.edu). Museum-goers can therefore access the information as part of the groundwork for their visit, or as continuing research after they have seen the installation. It also serves as a separate resource for anyone who is interested in Dura-Europos – the general public, scholars, and students, even those who may be unable to visit New Haven. The project represents another interdisciplinary collaboration among staff from a variety of departments (curatorial, IT, editorial, and graphic design) as well as outside consultants. As with the mithraeum reconstruction project, close communication among team members proved to be an integral element of this pioneering venture, which was

¹³ On which see the contribution to this volume by T. Gnoli.

one of the first technology projects implemented with the post-renovation reopening of the Gallery.¹⁴

Horse Armor

The Gallery's collection of artefacts excavated from Dura-Europos includes several unique and significant objects, many of which are "pilgrimage pieces" that attract international interest. Due to their fragile nature, uneven state of preservation, and previous conservation and/or restoration treatments, many of these objects also posed challenges of conservation and installation. One such example is the complete set of scale armor for a horse in the Roman army, excavated in Tower 19 during the 1932–3 campaign [PLATE LX].¹⁵ The equipment would have been used by a soldier known as a "cataphract" or *clibanarius*, terms used in antiquity to describe the most heavily-armored cavalry riders in Seleucid, Parthian, Sasanian, and Roman armies. Because its structure includes iron scales, leather strips, rawhide stitches, and linen cloth, the preservation of this armor is particularly remarkable.¹⁶ Shortly after being brought to New Haven, the armor was lent to the Higgins Armory Museum, then known as Higgins's 'Steel Museum,' in Worcester, MA. It appears that Higgins had the armor cleaned by workers from his company, Worcester Pressed Steel.¹⁷ The piece was next analyzed and treated in 1986 by conservator Catherine Sease.¹⁸

¹⁴ I am particularly grateful to the following gallery staff for their significant involvement in this project: Ariana French, Collections Database Administrator and Web Projects Coordinator; Tiffany Sprague, Director of Publications and Editorial Services; Kate Ezra, the Nolen Curator of Education and Academic Affairs; Jessica Sack, the Jan and Frederick Mayer Associate Curator of Public Education; Christopher Sleboda, Director of Graphic Design, and Michael Krol, Graphic Designer; and John French, Director of Visual Resources. The 3-D reconstructions are the work of J. Matthew Harrington, a specialist in archaeological reconstructions who has worked previously on the sites of Pisidian Antioch and Samothrace. Harrington's work on Antioch, done as part of an exhibition at the University of Michigan's Kelsey Museum, can be viewed online: www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/antioch/. The design of the kiosk/Web site was defined and developed by the Manhattan-based firm Flat Inc. (<http://www.flat.com/index.php>). Flat partner Doug Lloyd managed the project and oversaw a team that included Bryan Winters (software development) and Petter Ringbom (art direction).

¹⁵ YUAG no. 1933.680. Cf. *Rep.* IV, pl. XXII; James (2004) no. 450. A second complete set of horse armor, but with bronze rather than iron scales, was also discovered in the excavation; it was sent to Damascus.

¹⁶ For a complete description of the object's fabrication techniques and technology, see Sease (1987).

¹⁷ Treatment proposal by Carol Snow, Art Conservation Associates in 2006, Dura-Europos Collection, YUAG.

¹⁸ Sease performed the following treatments: "The [armor] was removed from a galvanized metal mesh, which had damaged the leather and textile, and was then stabilized with more

While on display at the Higgins Armory Museum in 2003, a flood caused significant water damage to the Dura-Europos horse armor. The iron scales suffered corrosion, and many of them became detached and/or misaligned. The leather and rawhide elements of the object shrank and stiffened. Much of this damage was considered to be irreversible.¹⁹ In the spring of 2007 the horse armor was treated by Carol Snow and Nina Vinogradskaya of Art Conservation Associates. Rawhide strips that had become detached and loose were secured with linen thread. Pieces of rawhide in a particularly fragile state were wrapped with silk crepe and reattached with acrylic adhesive. Corrosion on the iron scales was removed using a combination of tannic acid and extremely fine, soft bristle brushes. This treatment also gave the surface a slight patination and began to restore its appearance to one nearer that which it had upon excavation, before the drastic cleaning of the 1930s. Loose iron scales were secured with linen thread. A styrofoam form provided temporary structure for the object until a mount could be designed and manufactured.

Once brought back to Yale in 2007, the horse armor was held in off-site storage. In preparation for its installation in the permanent exhibition, research was done into possible materials and forms for its mount. Since the armor was fabricated to fit the body of a horse, a mount for the object was designed to imitate the natural contours of a horse (but an ancient horse, which would have been much smaller than its modern counterpart). Communication with companies that build mounts for saddles or models of horses for public use allowed gallery conservators and mount makers to create a mount that is both structurally and aesthetically ideal. Magnetic strips were utilized as a non-invasive means of distributing the weight of the iron scales and protecting the object's fragile components. Never before on view at Yale, the armor now forms a major feature of the new Dura-Europos gallery.

Copies of the Synagogue Paintings

Another important component of the Gallery's collection is the series of full-scale copies of the Dura-Europos synagogue wall paintings that were

acceptable conservation materials. [It] was tied onto a polyethylene mesh support using linen thread. The leather was repaired with strips of nylon gossamer adhered with polyvinyl acetate adhesive. Loose rawhide strips were secured with polyvinyl acetate. Corroding copper wire was treated with benzotriazole." Treatment proposal by Carol Snow, Art Conservation Associates in 2006, Dura-Europos Collection, YUAG.

¹⁹ Damage Assessment Report by Toby Raphael, Art and Artifact Conservator, December 2003, Dura-Europos Collection, YUAG.

made at the site [PLATE LXI]. After the paintings were uncovered in the 1932–3 campaign, the university commissioned Herbert Gute, a recent graduate from the Yale School of Fine Arts, to copy them before they were removed from the walls.²⁰ The original paintings from the synagogue eventually went to the National Museum of Damascus, but the entire set of Gute's copies went to Yale. These copies were painted on paper that was then mounted on wallboard. He also treated the surface with something, possibly including dirt or sand, to give them an appearance that approximates actual wall paintings. After being brought back to New Haven, several of the copies were framed and placed on display in the museum's Classical Collection [PLATE LXII]. Later they hung for many years in History of Art classrooms. They are currently in off-site storage; four of them were part of the 2011 exhibition "Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity" at the McMullen Museum of Art.²¹

Because the Gute copies are not ancient works of art, there are no current plans to put them on view in the gallery's ancient Mediterranean installation. They are, however, of crucial importance in teaching and scholarship, and will remain accessible by appointment. They are interesting, first and foremost, as reflections of the iconography of the Dura-Europos synagogue, whose figural imagery surprised many scholars upon its discovery, when it was thought that early synagogue decoration adhered to the biblical prohibition of figural images. They are also important examples of archaeological documentation in the 1920s and 1930s, when archaeologists recorded their finds through verbal descriptions, drawings, and paintings, in addition to photographs. Although Gute did use artistic license in the copies, particularly in completing areas not well preserved or details (such as inscriptions) that he did not understand, their overall compositions and color schemes provide a valuable counterpart to the actual wall paintings from the Christian building and the mithraeum that came to Yale and to the synagogue paintings that are in Damascus.

Papyrus Documents

The Yale University Art Gallery is not the only institution at Yale that holds a collection of objects from the Dura-Europos excavation. The papyri and parchments found at the site in the 1920s and 1930s were integrated into the Yale Papyrus Collection, housed in the Beinecke Rare

²⁰ Hopkins (1979) 208.

²¹ The four included in the exhibition are YUAG nos 1936.127.3, 1936.127.7, 1936.127.8, and 1936.127.12.

Book and Manuscript Library.²² The collection was begun in 1889 with a gift of Egyptian papyri excavated by William M. F. Petrie at Hawara and expanded thereafter through gifts, purchases, and excavated finds. The Dura-Europos papyri, which are part of this collection but are numbered separately, include about one hundred and fifty documents and letters in Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Middle Persian, and Hebrew, and were published in the excavation's final report on parchments and papyri.²³ These texts provide valuable insight into ancient daily life and represent an important complement to the art and artefacts in the gallery's collection. The papyrus collection has been inventoried, digitized, and organized into a searchable online database through the Beinecke's website. The library is also a participating member in APIS (Advanced Papyrological Information System), which provides another search mechanism for the Dura-Europos papyri.²⁴

The majority of the surviving papyri from Dura-Europos are related to the military, including official letters, rosters, tabulations, and reports. Others are legal and civic in nature, including a divorce decree, deeds of sale and loan contracts, and receipts. A few literary works have also been identified, including fragments of Appian and Herodotus.²⁵ One of the most historically significant papyri is a fragment of the *Diatessaron*, a narrative composed by Tatian around AD 170 that combined elements of the four Gospels [PLATE LXIII].²⁶ The Dura-Europos example is the only known surviving manuscript of the *Diatessaron* in Greek. Other copies of the text exist, but only in languages other than Greek: Latin, Arabic, and Armenian. This text, combined with the early Christian house church and baptistery excavated at Dura-Europos, with its wall paintings thought to contain some of the earliest representations of Christ, is an important element in the study of Christianity as it developed in the eastern Mediterranean during the Roman period.

Reinstallation

When the Yale University Art Gallery reopened many of its galleries in 2012 after a major renovation, the ancient Mediterranean collection on

²² See <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/digitallibrary/papyrus.html>.

²³ Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959).

²⁴ See www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/projects/digital/apis/.

²⁵ Herodotus: *P. Dura* 1, P.CtYBR inv.DP83 = Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 69–70, pl. II;

Appian: *P. Dura* 2, P.CtYBR inv.DP 84 = Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 70–1, pl. II.

²⁶ *P. Dura* 10, P.CtYBR inv.DPg 24 = Welles, Fink and Gilliam (1959) 73–4, pl. IV; Kraeling (1935); Burkitt (1935); Plooi (1935); Baumstark (1978); Petersen (1994); Parker, Taylor and Goodacre (1999); Joosten (2003).

view included a separate thematic installation of the Dura-Europos collection: the Mary and James Ottaway Gallery of Dura-Europos. The space is organized into overlapping themes: Daily Life, Religion, Military, and Funerary [PLATE LXIV]. An introduction to the site utilizing large-scale photo murals from the excavation archives greets the visitor. This, together with a computer kiosk displaying reconstructions of the site and its major monuments within their geographic setting, strives to present the ancient city and its exploration in a vibrant, contextual manner. Viewers can now see objects of daily life that are immediately recognizable to modern eyes, including items of clothing and jewelry, writing implements, tools, musical instruments, pottery and glass vessels, and children's toys. Religion in antiquity was naturally an important part of daily life, and the complex religious landscape at Dura-Europos reflected the city's multicultural population. Graeco-Roman deities integrated with Mesopotamian cults coexisted along with meeting places for the Christian and Jewish communities. Certain religions, such as the cult of Mithras, thrived in the military sector of the city. The physical reconstruction of the mithraeum thus bridges the sections of "Religion" and "Military." Examples of arms and armor from the excavations are also on view, including the horse armor, as well as rarely-preserved painted shields. Exhibits exploring warfare and the fall of the city in the siege of the 250s lead visitors naturally to thoughts of death and commemoration. Objects from a single tomb are presented as a group, along with a variety of funerary markers from Dura-Europos as well as the closely-related city of Palmyra.

With the reinstallation of the Dura-Europos collection at the Gallery, and the new information and reconstructions that are available online, our hope is that the international audience that has been fascinated with Dura-Europos since its discovery and exploration in the 1920s feels new inspiration to visit New Haven and experience personally the objects in a thematic installation that is both art historical and archaeological. In 2014–15, a special exhibition, "Roman in the Provinces: Art on the Periphery of Empire", examined Roman provincial cultures including Syria, with the goal of understanding the finds from Dura-Europos within a broader regional and historical context. The accompanying publication, another collaborative project between the gallery and the McMullen Museum of Art, presented new scholarship on the Roman provinces and demonstrated the great potential for future research on Dura-Europos and other sites around the edges of the Roman Empire.²⁷ Stay tuned!

²⁷ Brody and Hoffman (2014).

Plates



PLATE I Map of Dura-Europos. MFSDE, after *Rep.* VII–VIII, redesigned by H. David (2005).



PLATE II Fresco of the sacrifice of Julius Terentius.



PLATE III Finger rings from Dura, including ring-keys.



PLATE IV Bracelets from Dura. YUAG negative Yale-794.

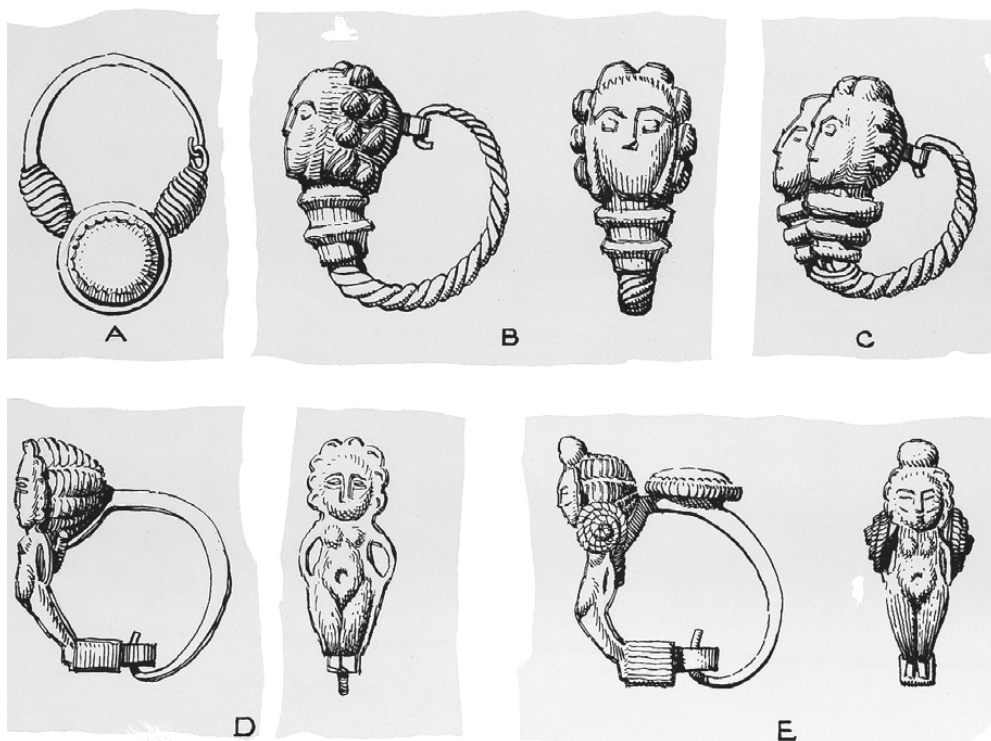


PLATE V Typology by N. Toll of earrings which occur in the necropolis (not including the simplest types).

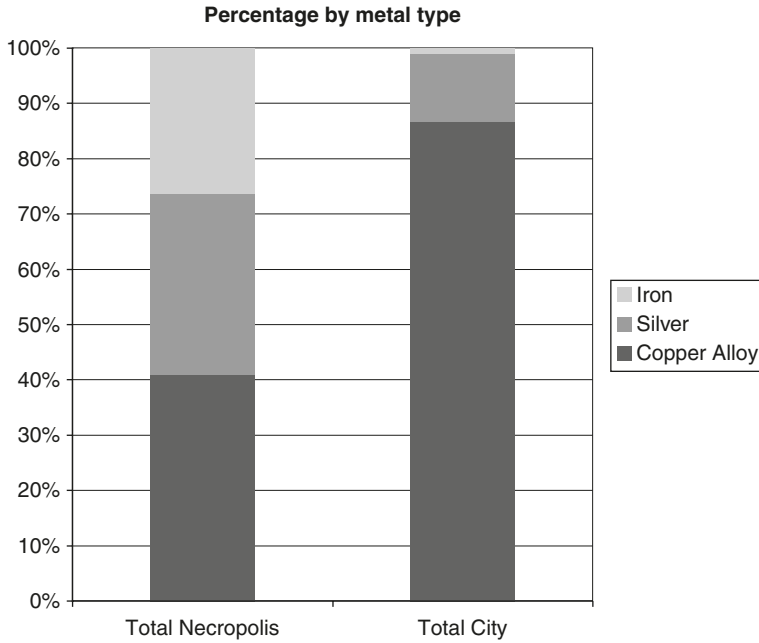


PLATE VI Chart showing the different proportions of metals represented in the excavated jewellery between the necropolis and settlement at Dura.

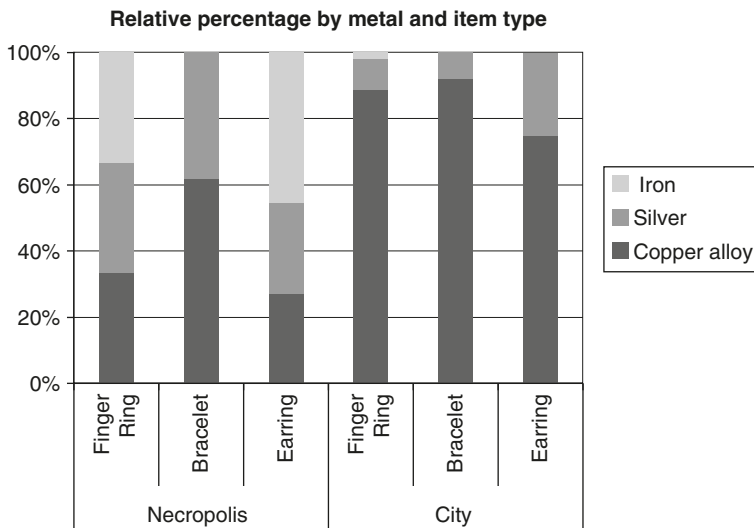


PLATE VII Chart showing the relative proportion of each type of jewellery item in the necropolis (left) and within the settlement (right). Note in particular the prevalence of iron finger rings and earrings in the necropolis assemblage.



PLATE VIII Bone objects from Dura including bone pins.

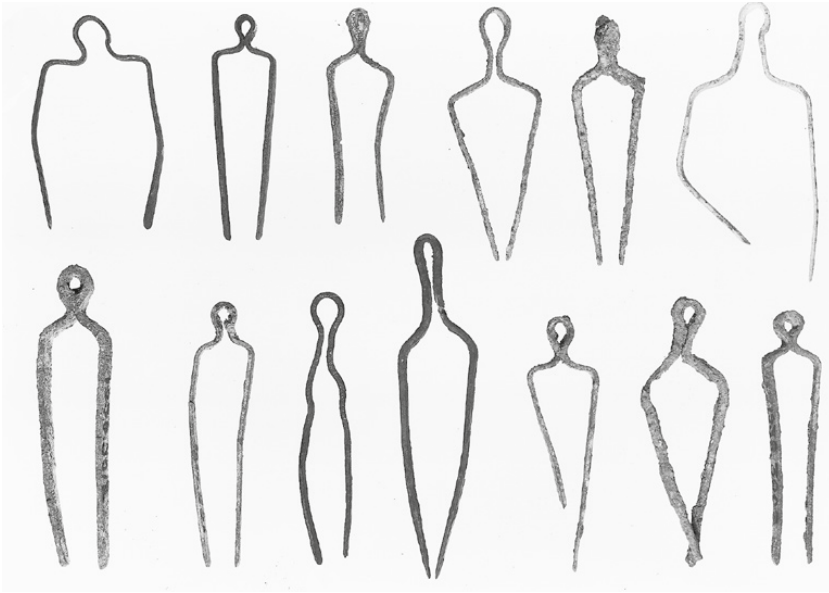


PLATE IX Tweezers found at Dura. YUAG negative Yale-903.

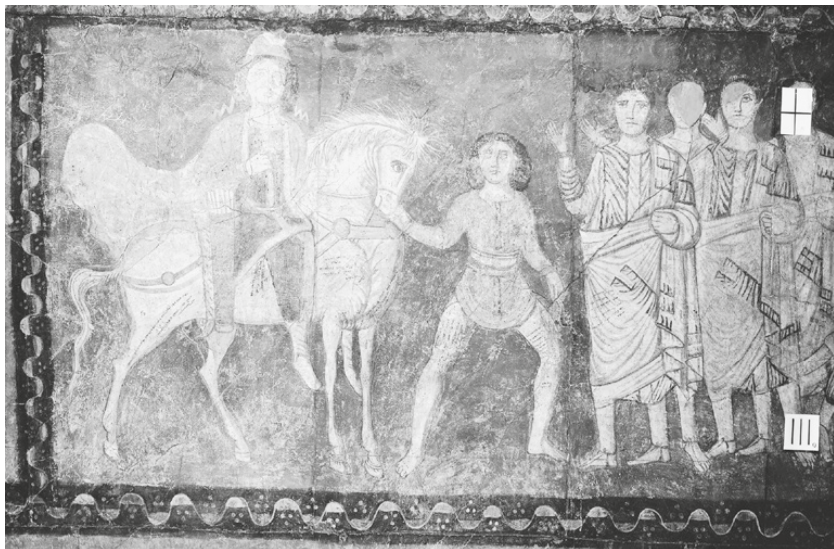


PLATE X Synagogue fresco of Mordecai and Esther.



PLATE XI Relief representing Aphlad, the god from the village of Anath.



PLATE XII Relief representing the statue of Artemis-Azzanathkona.



PLATE XIII Relief representing the god Yarhibol of the Source, from the temple 'of the Gadde'.

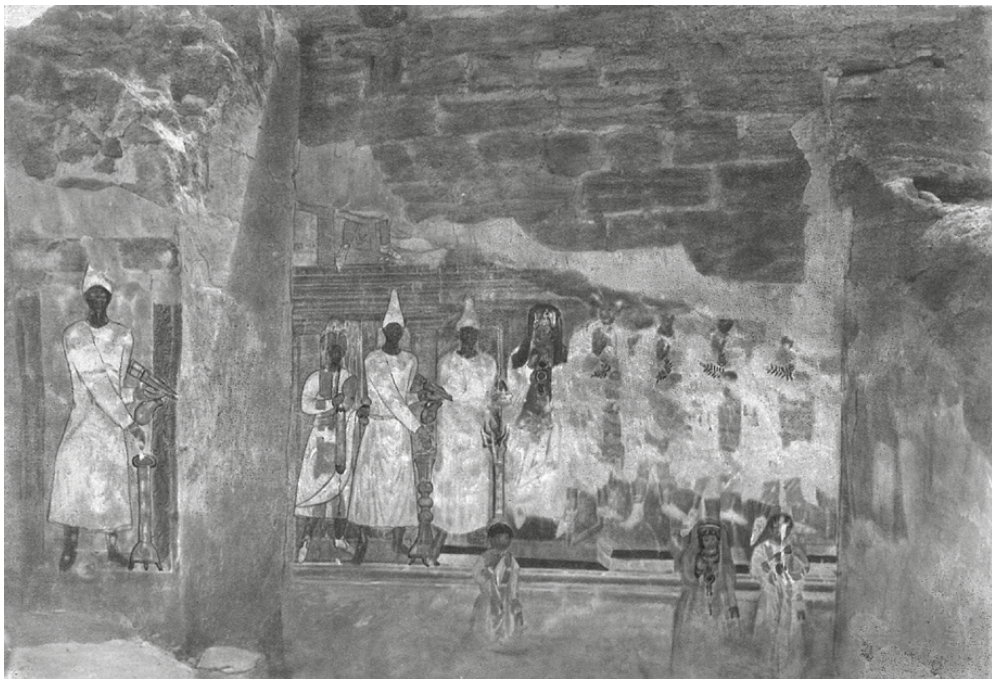


PLATE XIV Fresco of Konon, colourised photograph.



PLATE XV Fragmentary painting of anonymous lady, from the side wall of the naos of the temple of Zeus Theos.



PLATE XVI Detail of Abraham, from the west wall of the synagogue.



PLATE XVII Detail of Mithras the hunter, from the late mithraeum.
Photo L. Dirven.



PLATE XVIII Painting of Heliodoros Actoaris, from the House of the Roman Scribes.



PLATE XIX Fresco of the so-called 'scène énigmatique'.



PLATE XX Mosaic depicting the discovery of Ariadne by Dionysus.

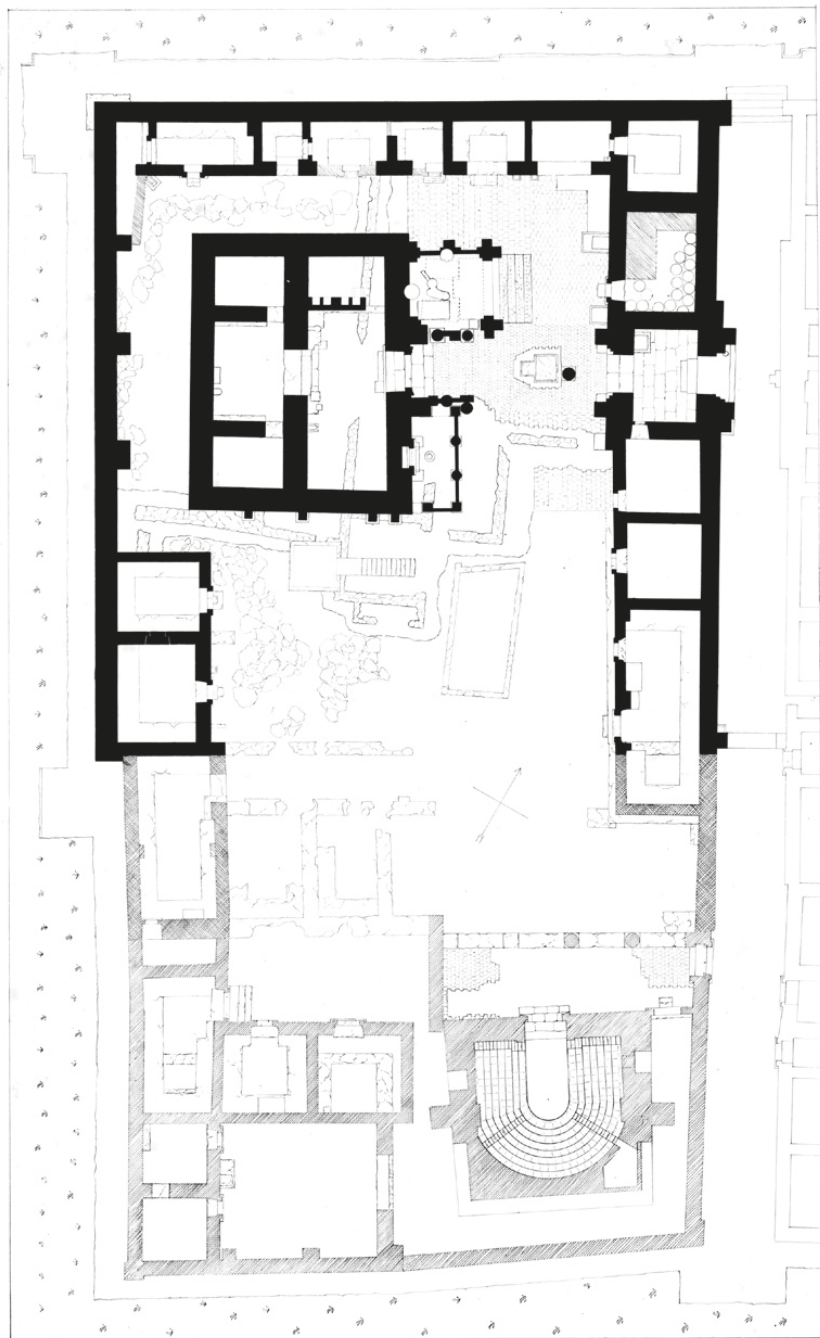


PLATE XXI Plan of the temple of Artemis.

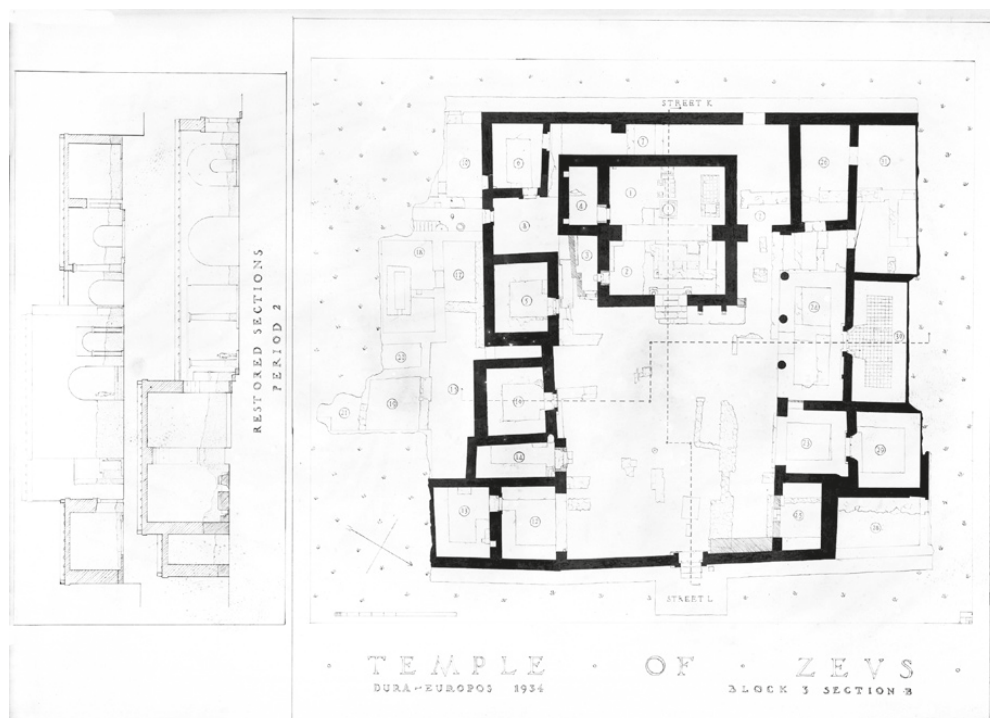


PLATE XXII Plan of the temple of Zeus Theos.



PLATE XXIII Temple of Zeus Theos as seen from the Euphrates approach.

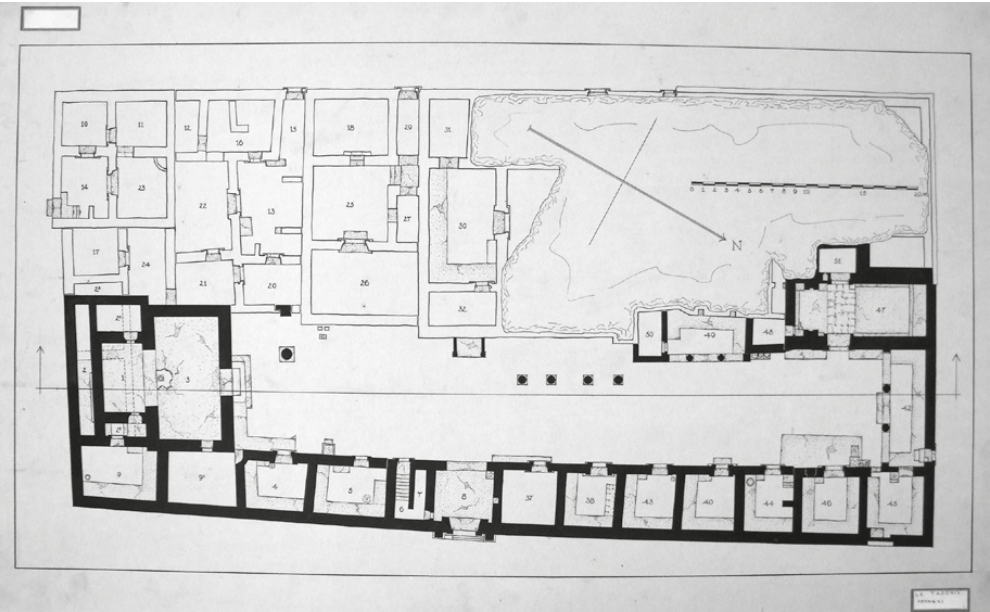


PLATE XXIV Plan of the temple of Adonis.

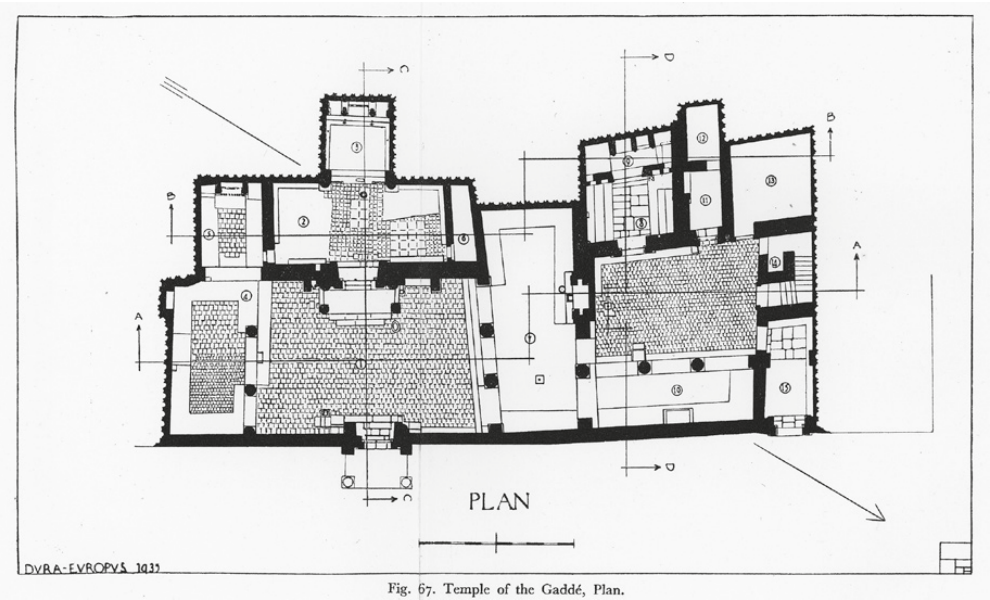


Fig. 67. Temple of the Gadde, Plan.

PLATE XXV Plan of the temple of the Gadde.

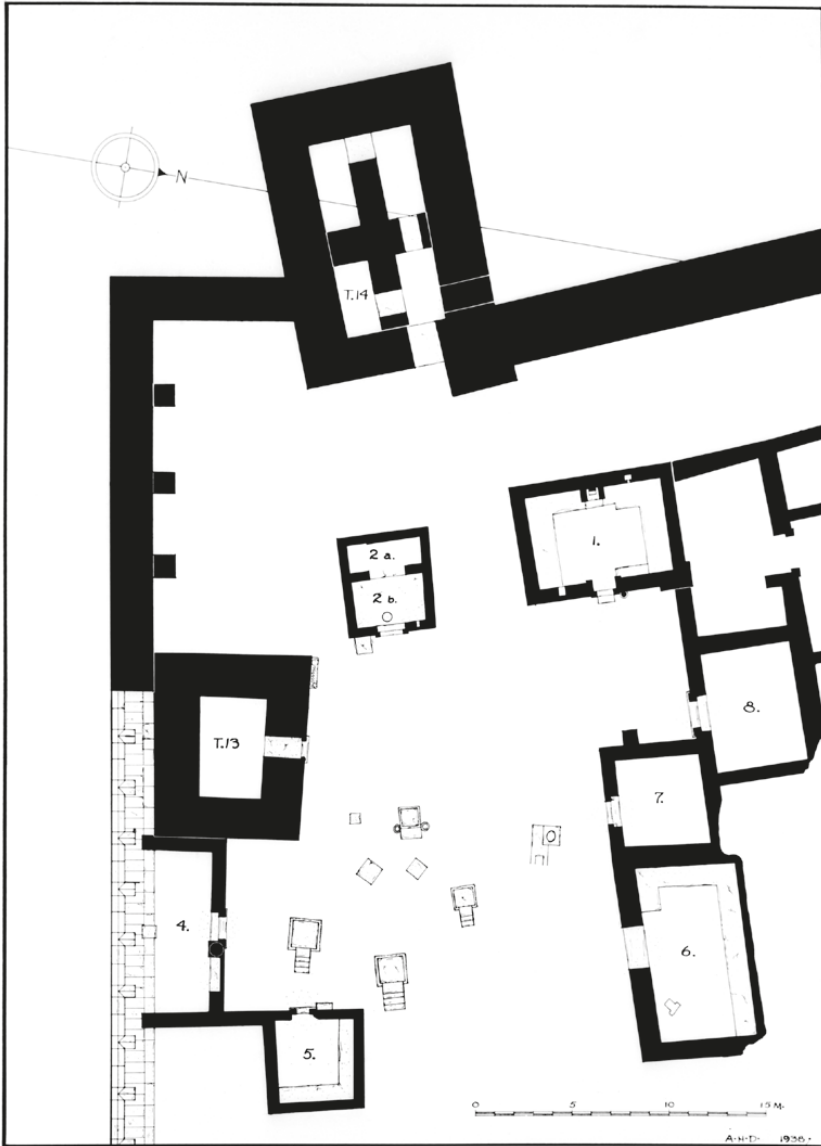


PLATE XXVI Plan of the temple of Aphlad.

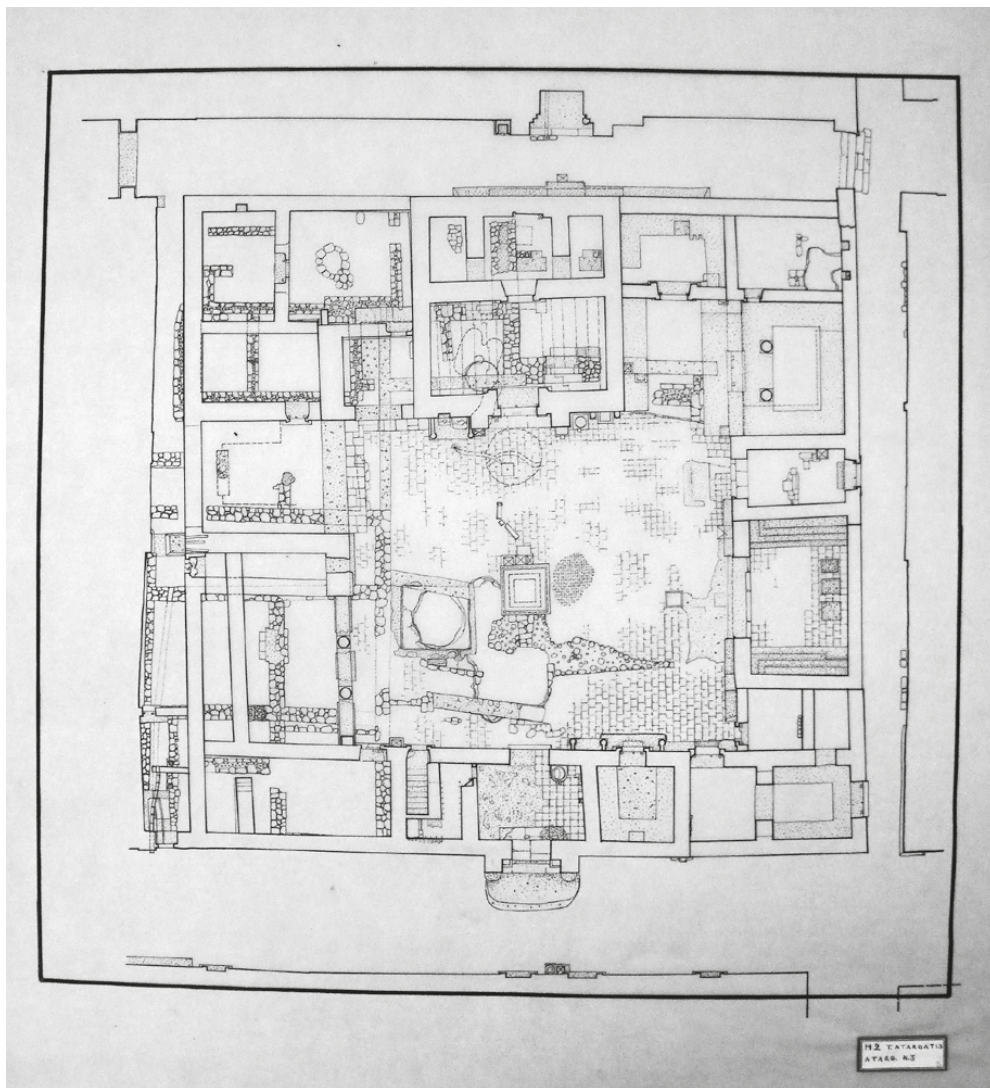


PLATE XXVII Plan of the temple of Atargatis.

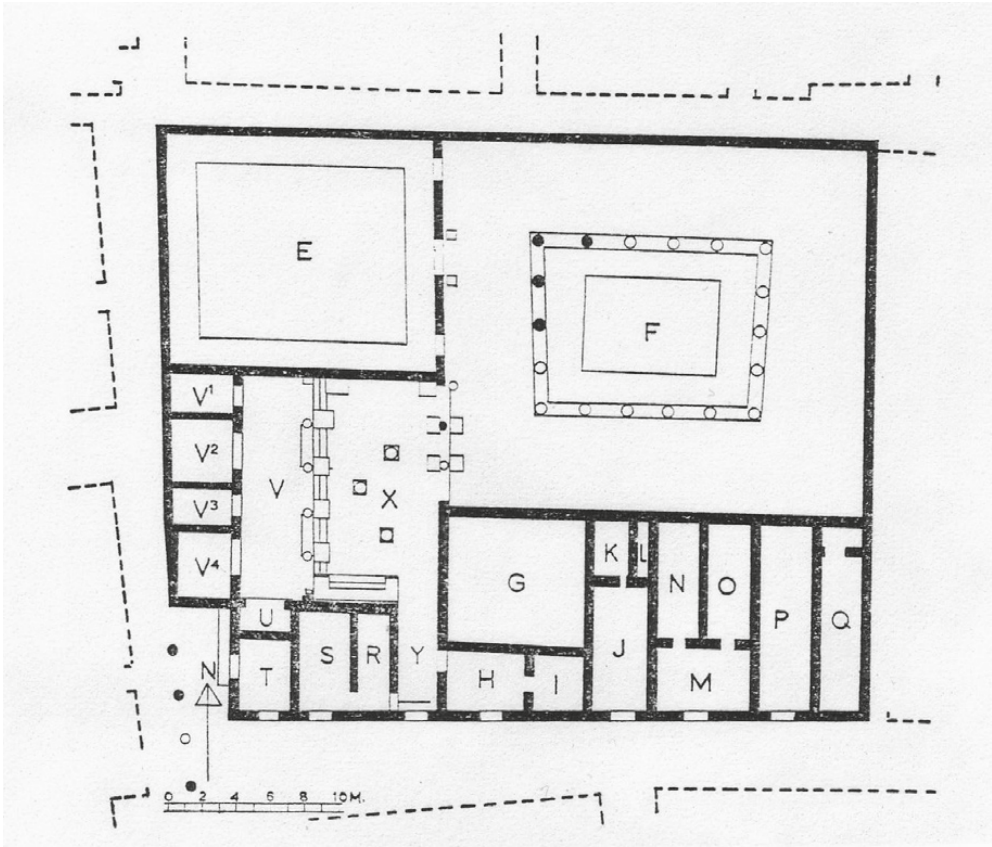


PLATE XXVIII Plan of the sanctuary-emporium of the association of merchants from Berytos on Delos.

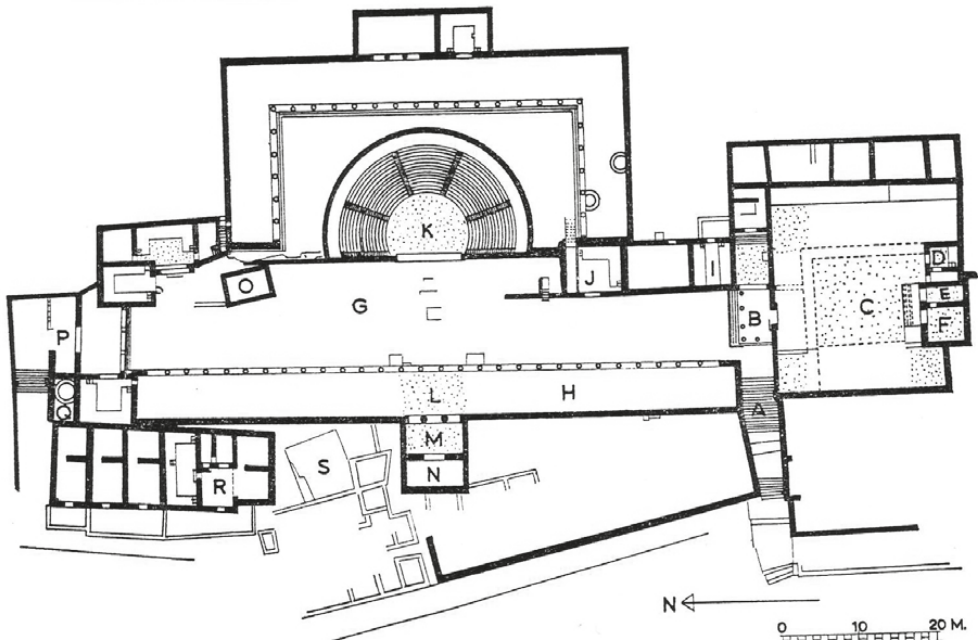


PLATE XXIX Sanctuary of the Syrian deities on Delos.



PLATE XXX Previous reconstruction of the cult niche of the mithraeum in YUAG.



PLATE XXXI The larger tauroctony in the mithraeum of Dura-Europos.



PLATE XXXII Fresco of the 'Dioscuri' in the mithraeum of Hawarte.

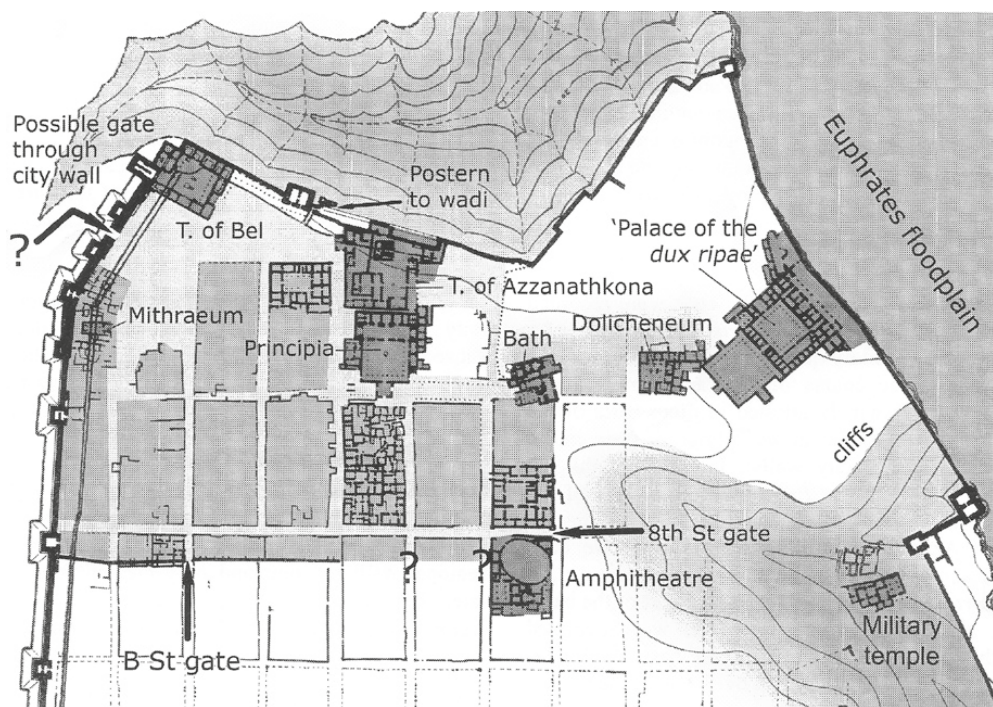


PLATE XXXIII Military base of Dura-Europos.

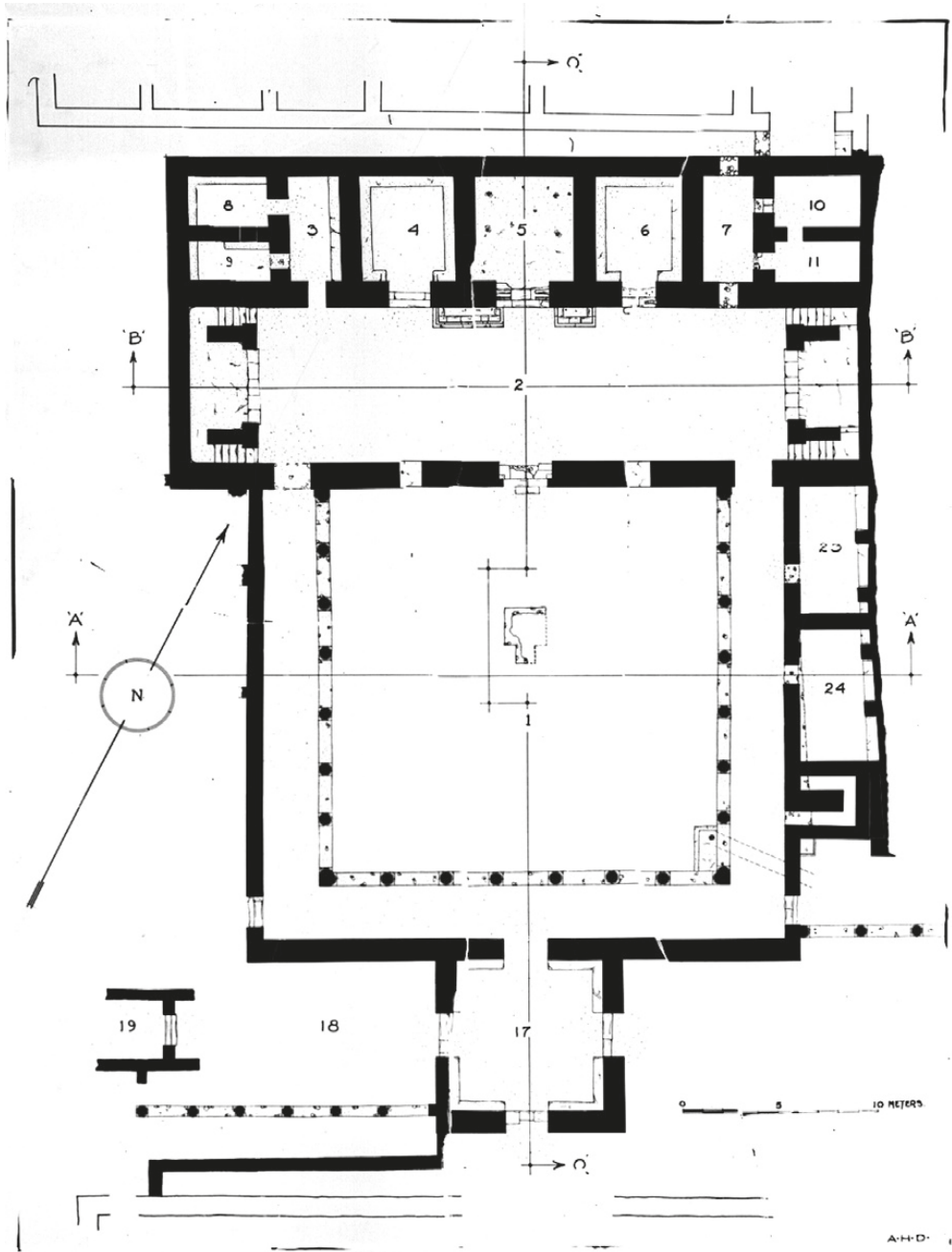


PLATE XXXIV Complex of the *principia* (E7).

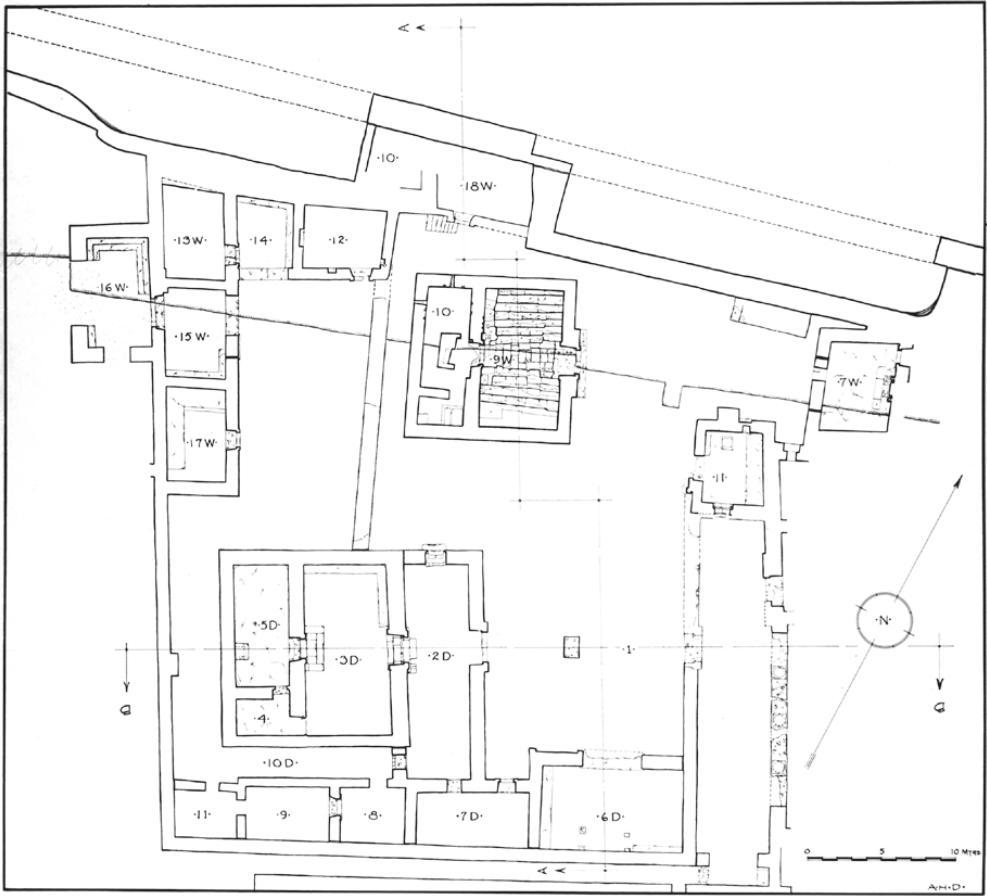


PLATE XXXV Plan of the temple of Azzanathkona.



PLATE XXXVI Drawing of sacrificial scene, temple of Azzanathkona.

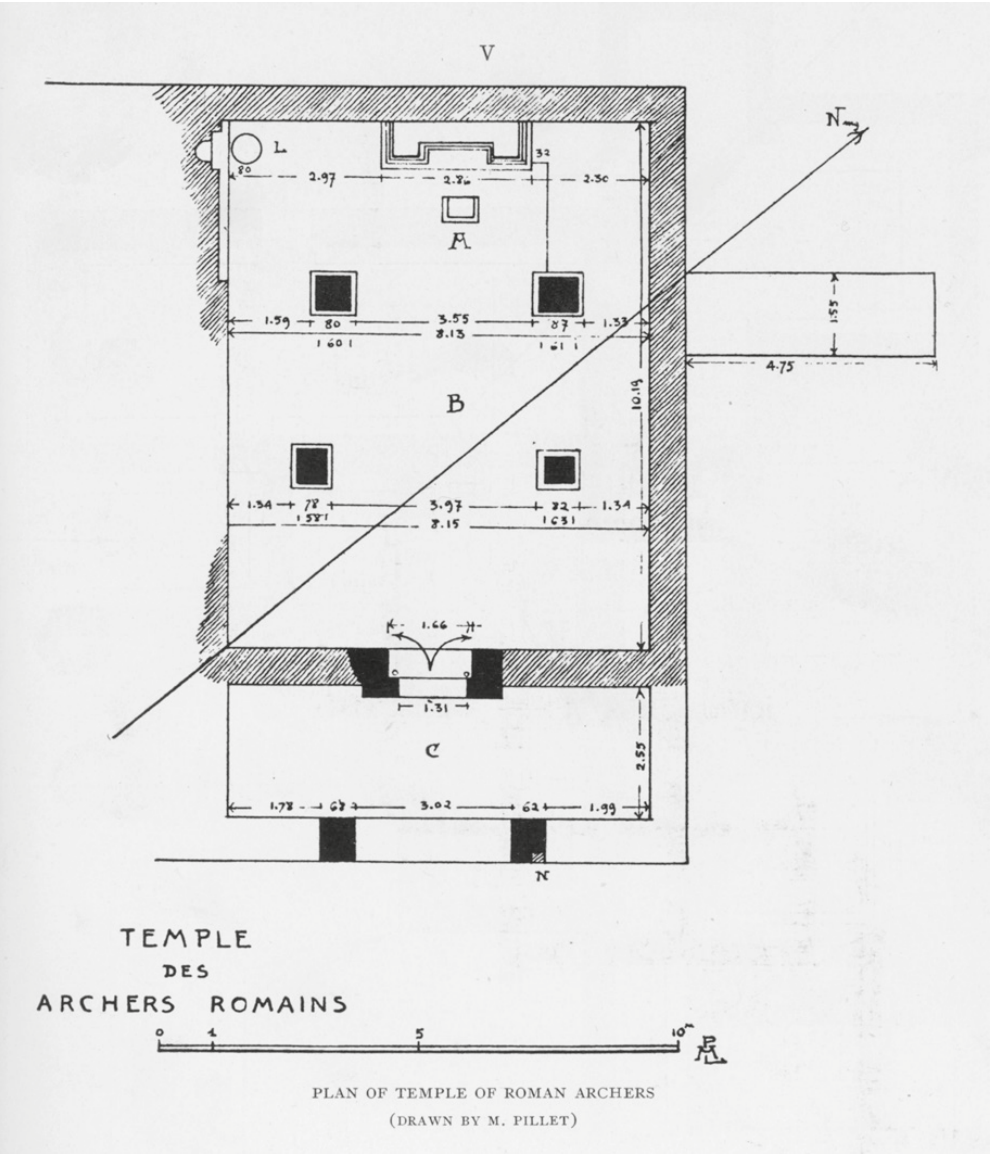


PLATE XXXVII Plan of the temple of the Roman archers.



PLATE XXXVIII Palmyra gate at Dura-Europos.

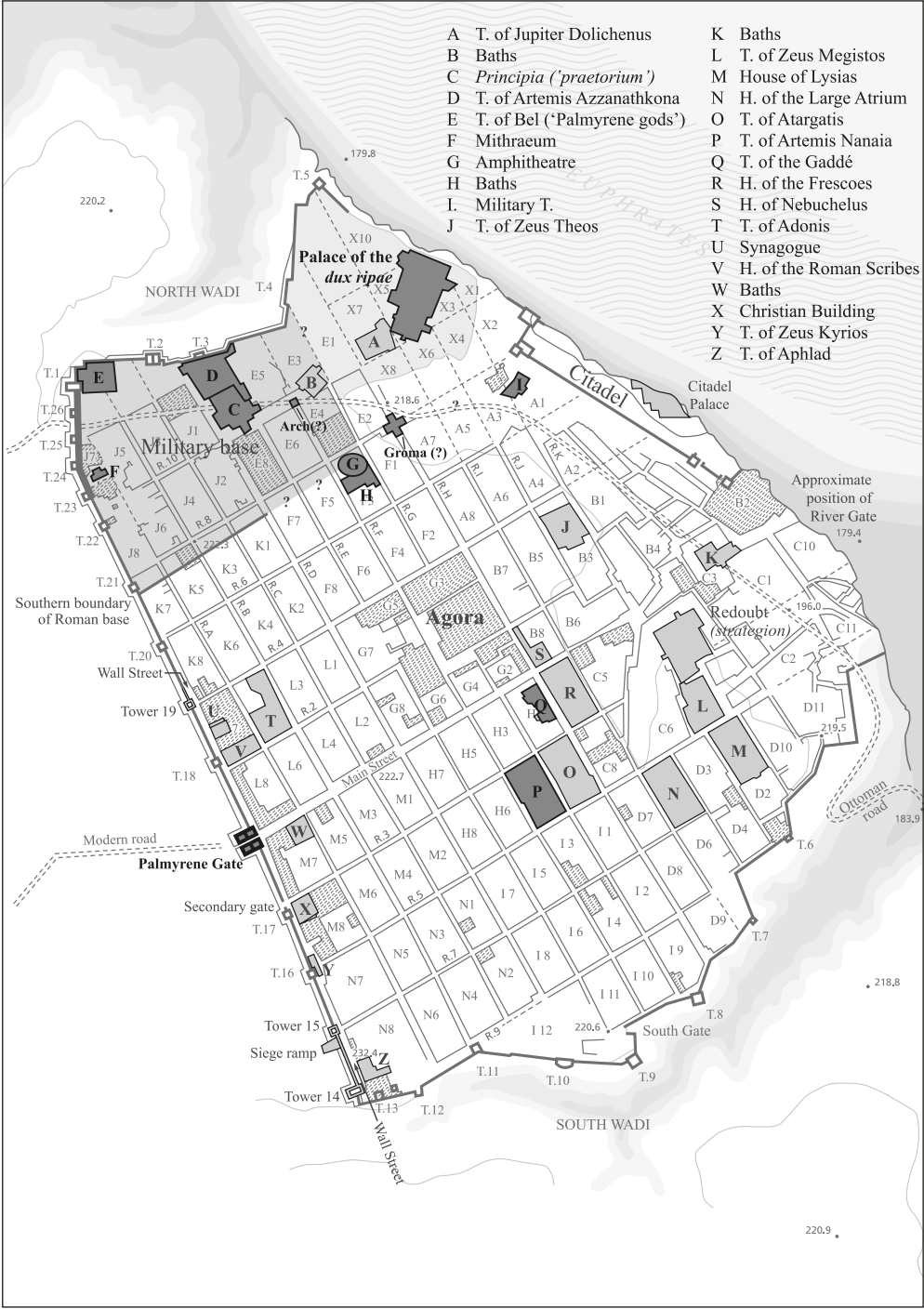


PLATE XXXIX Plan of Dura-Europos, with those areas with evidence of imperial representation in bold.

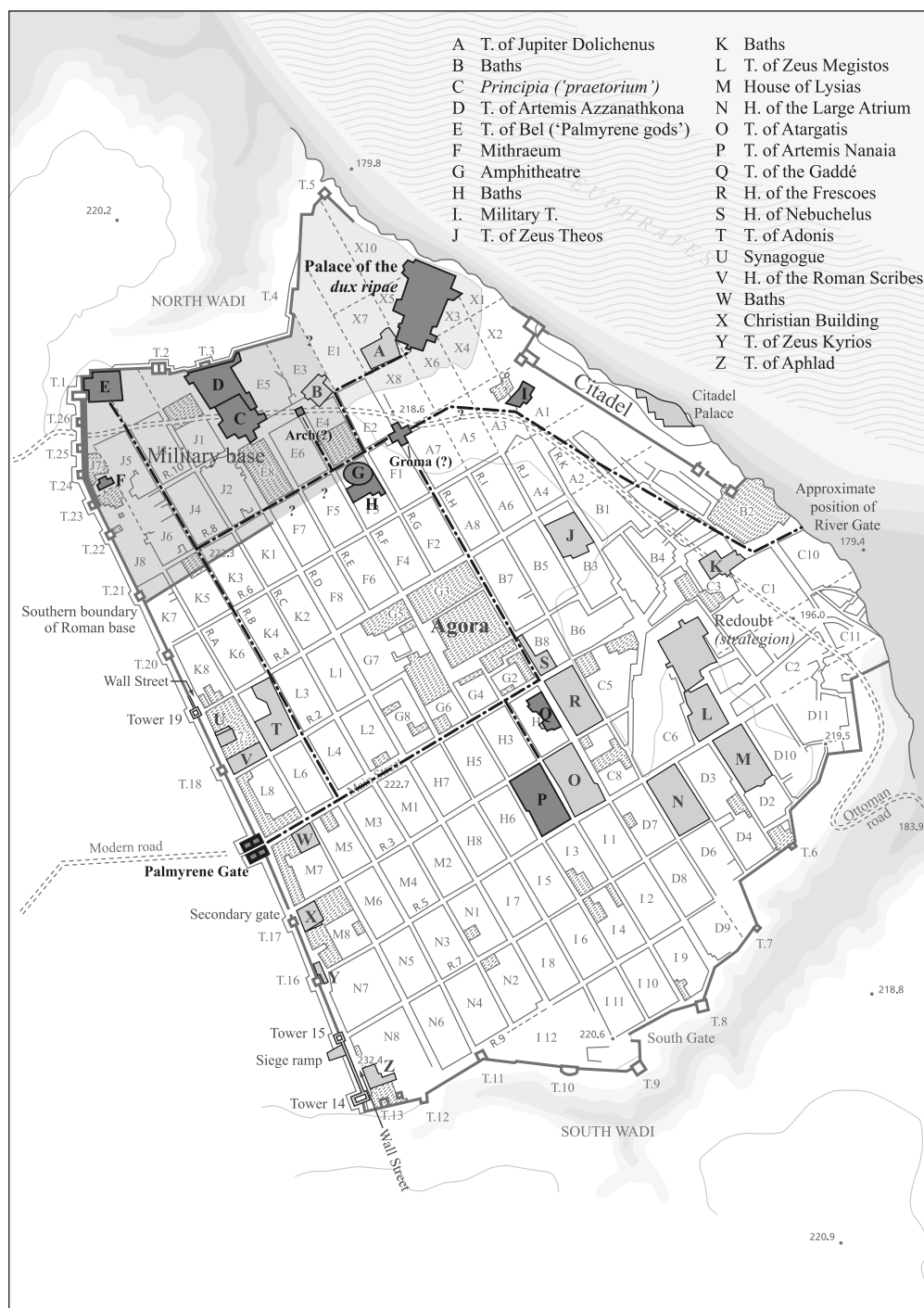


PLATE XL Plan of Dura-Europos, with those areas with evidence of imperial representation and the possible urban paths in bold.

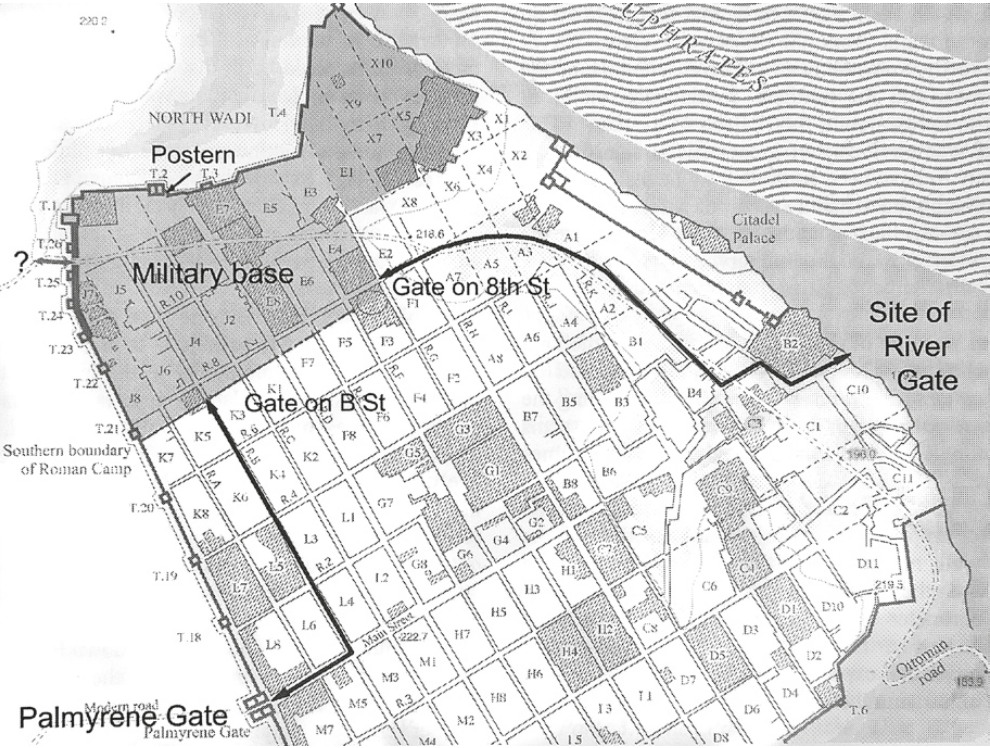


PLATE XLI Plan of Dura-Europos, with access routed to and from the military base.

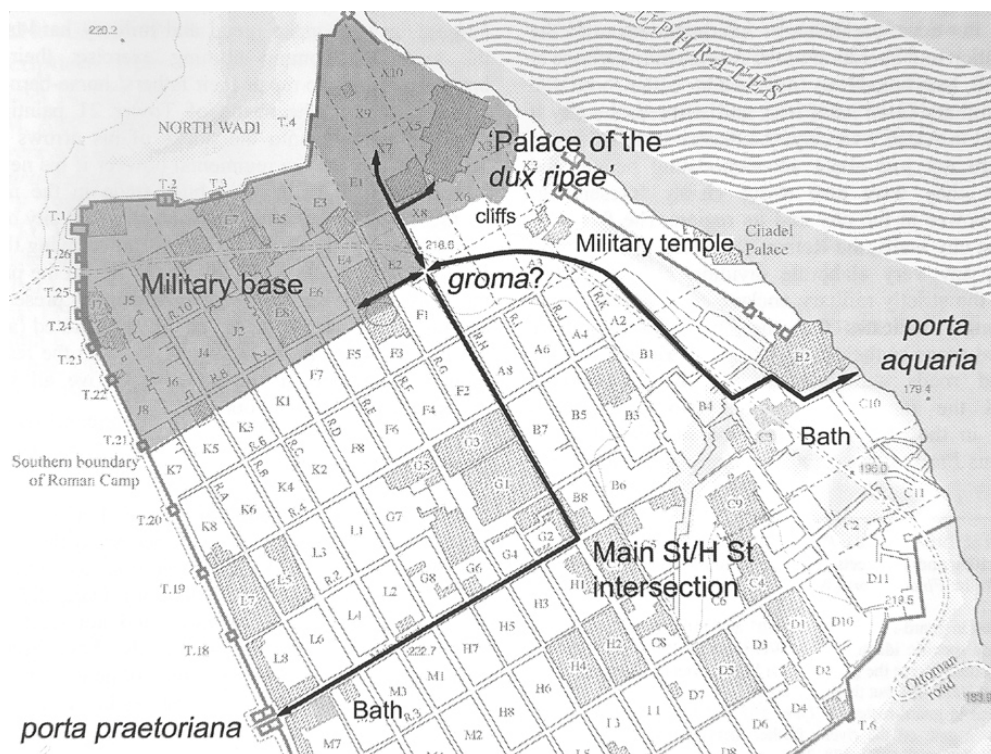


PLATE XLII Plan of Dura-Europos, with suggested main routes for the official traffic within the city and suggested identifications of the two *portae* and the *groma* mentioned in the military papyri.

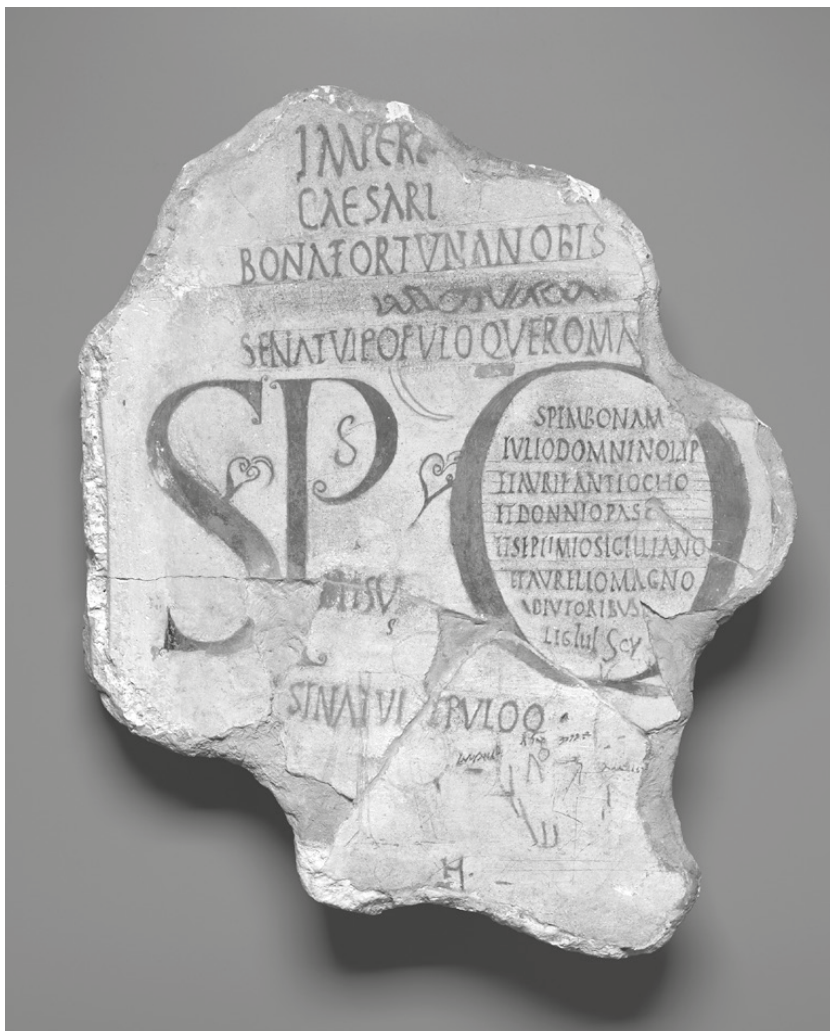
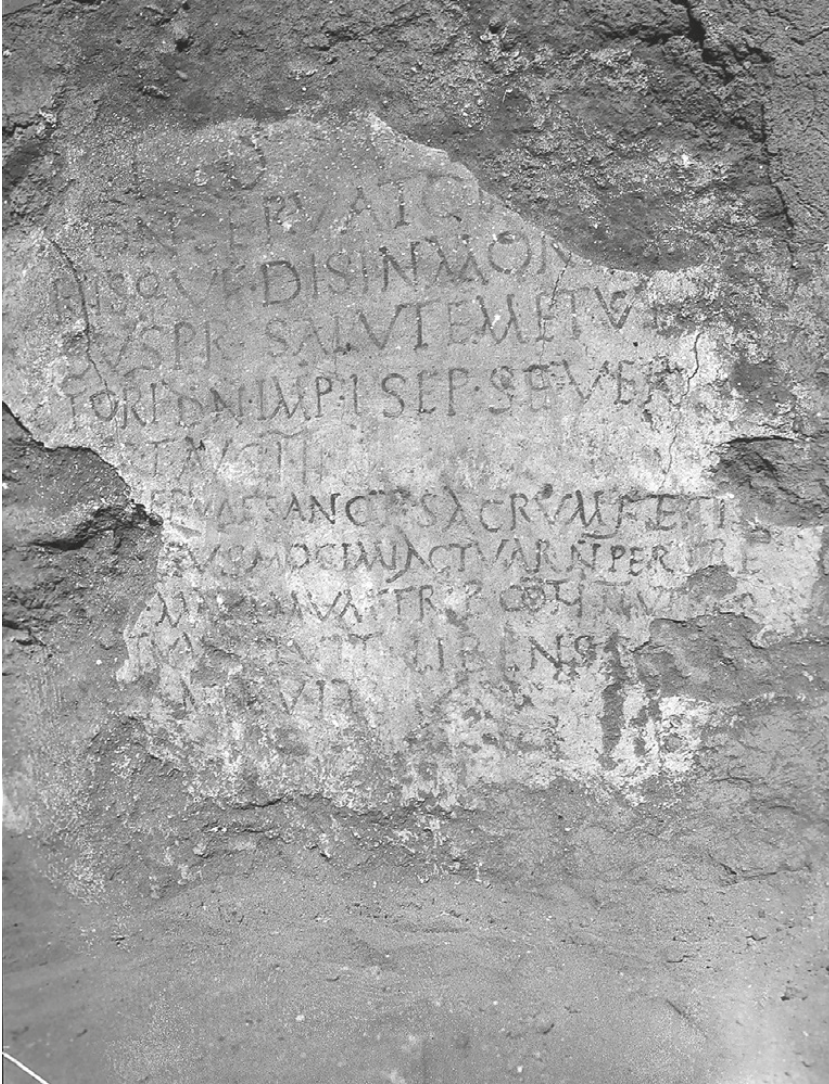


PLATE XLIII Painted inscription from the *principia*. From *Rep. V*, no. 560, pl. XXVII.1.



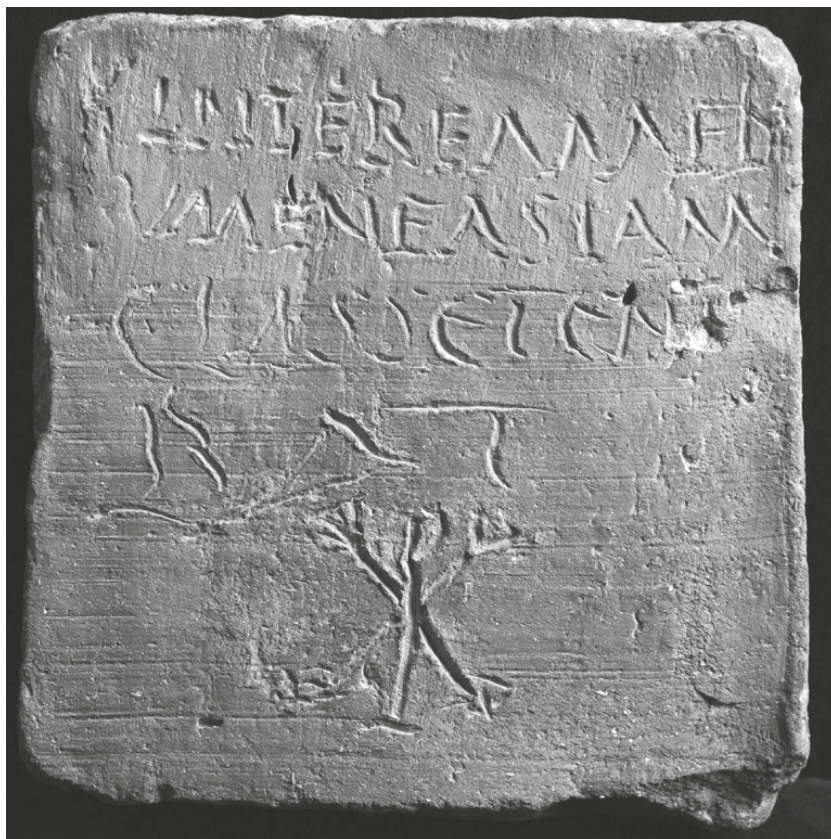


PLATE XLVI Mérida tile.

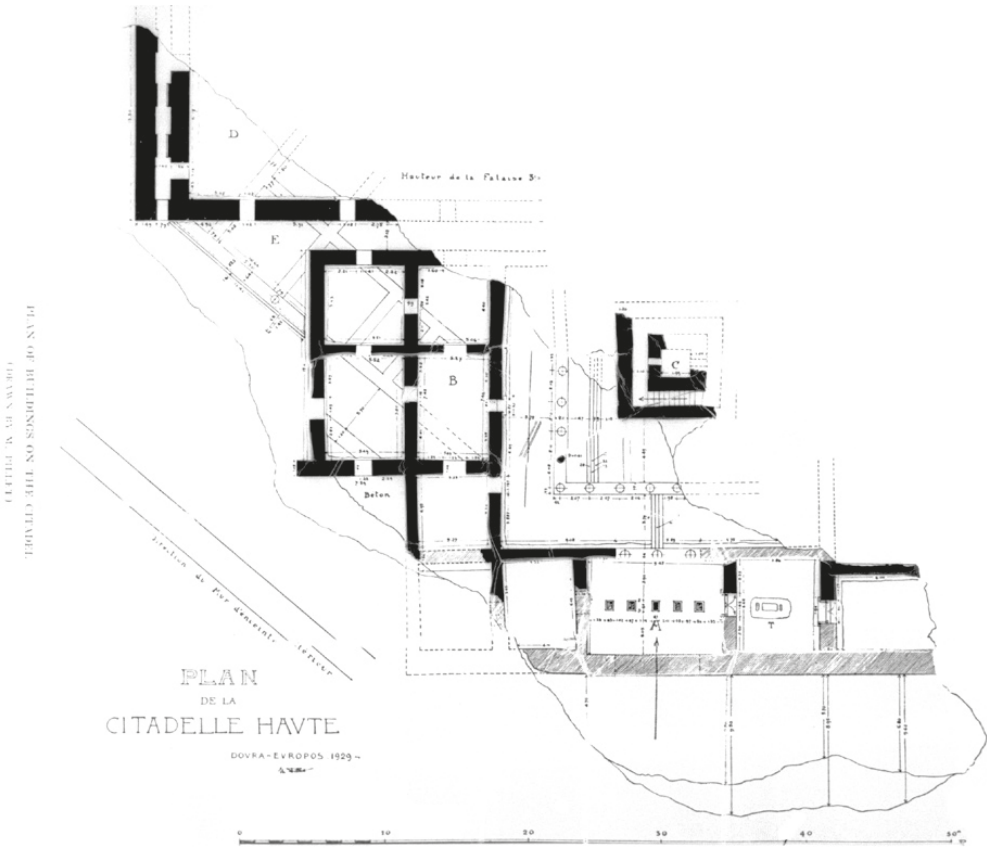


PLATE XLVII Plan of the citadel palace, Dura-Europos, after M. Pillet.

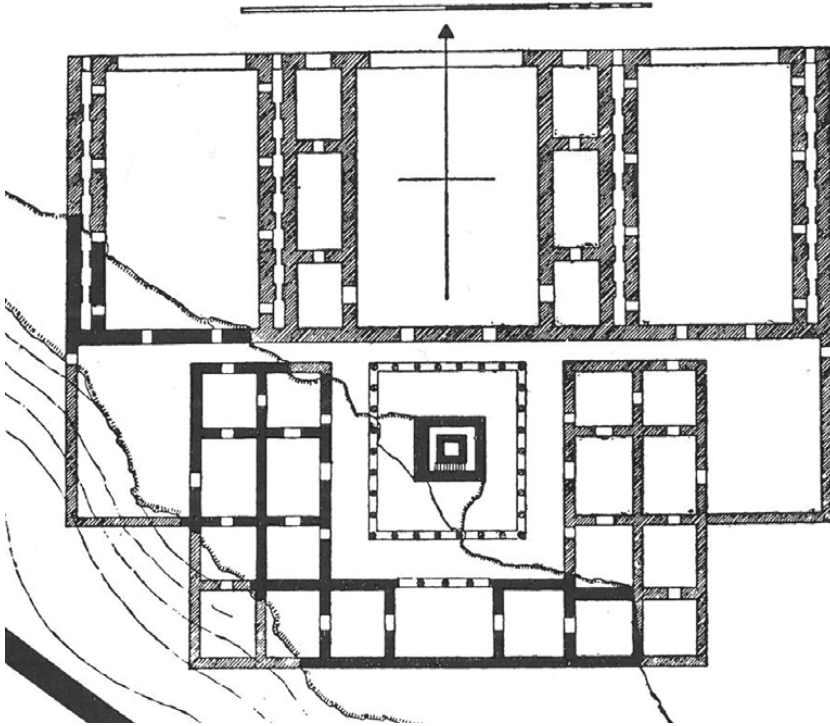


PLATE XLVIII Plan of the citadel palace, Dura-Europos, restored plan by F. Brown.



PLATE XLIX Complex of Shamash at Hatra.

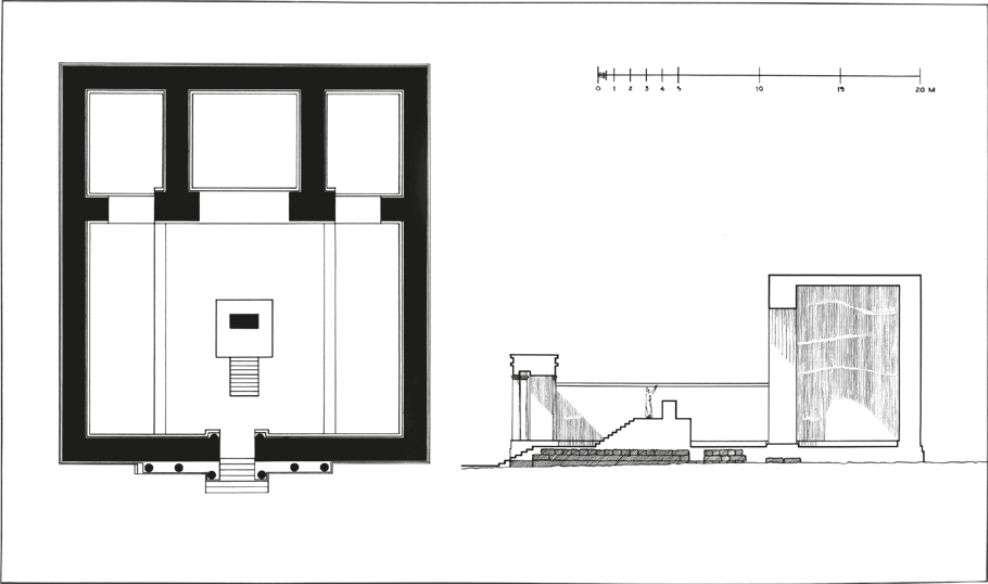


PLATE L Frank Brown's reconstruction of first phase of the temple of Zeus Megistos.

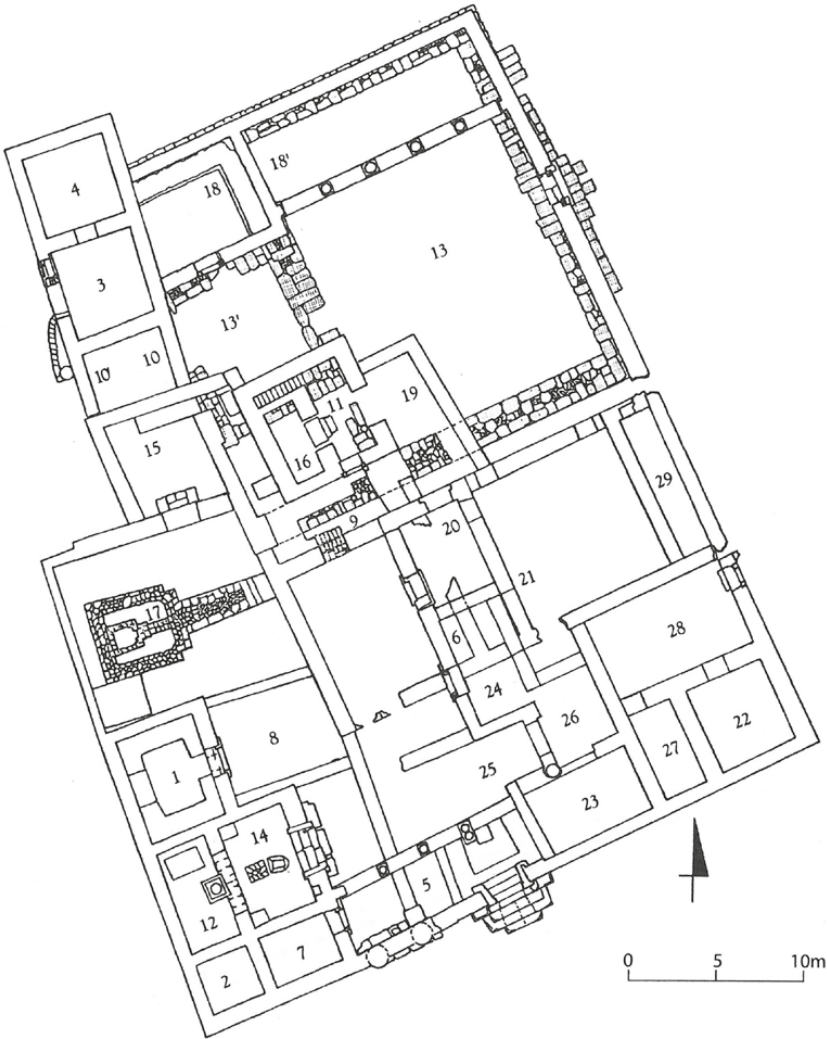


PLATE LI Actual state plan of the temple of Zeus Megistos.

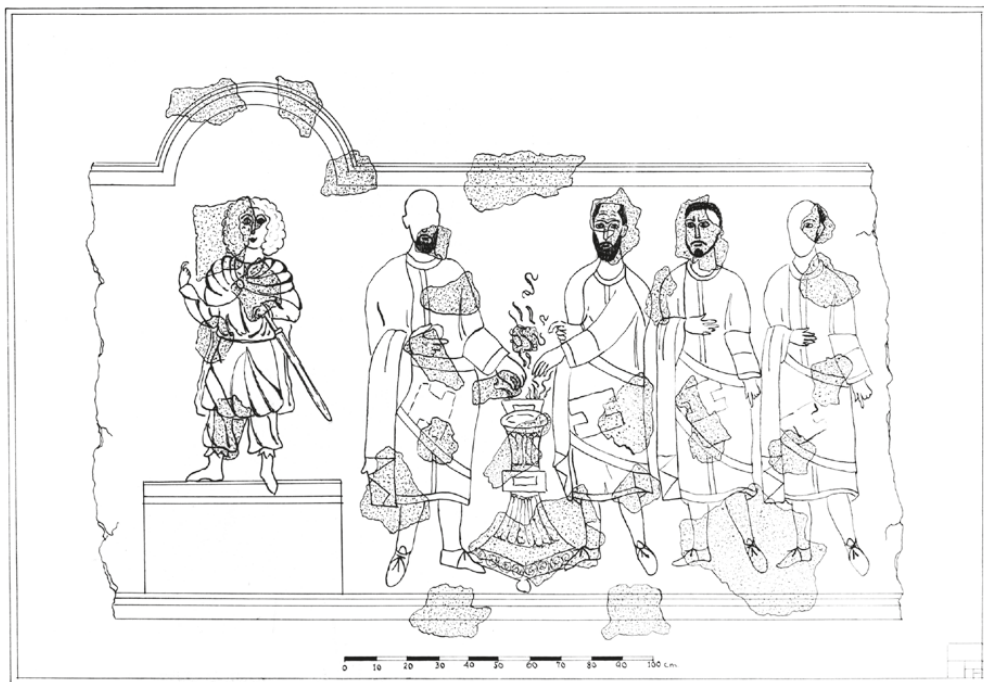


PLATE LII Drawn reconstruction of the paintings on the rear wall of the naos of the temple of Adonis.

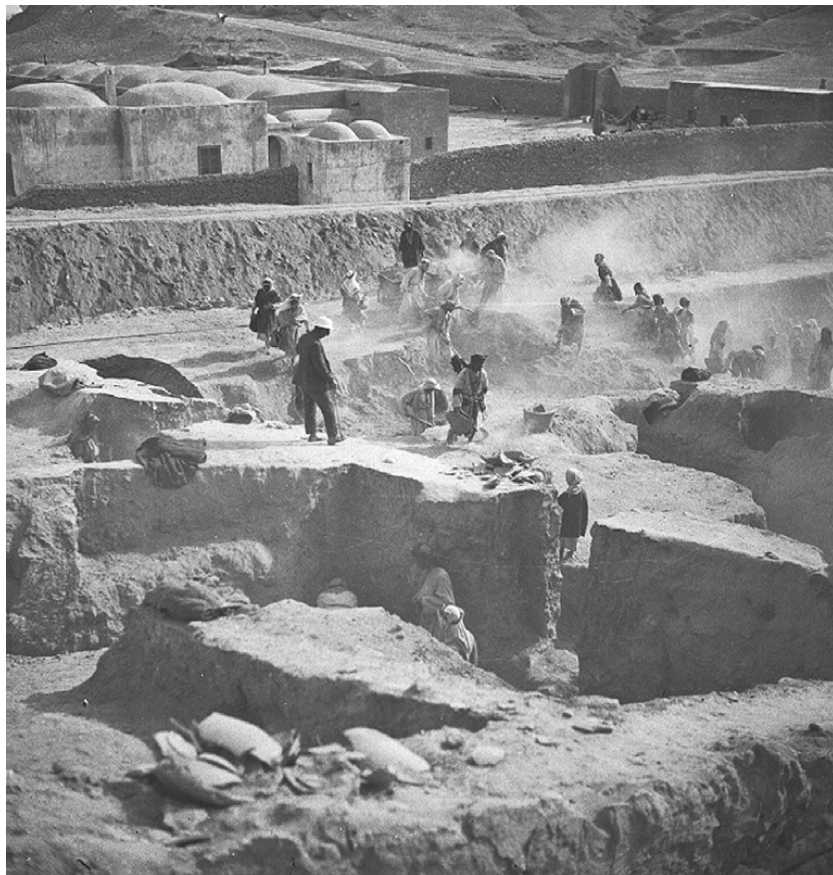


PLATE LIII Excavation of Dura-Europos, with excavation house visible in background, 1932–3.



PLATE LIV Niche of the baptistry in the Christian building at time of excavation, showing the Good Shepherd wall painting, 1932.



PLATE LV Good Shepherd wall painting at the time of excavation, 1932.



PLATE LVI Conservator Carol Snow working on one of the wall paintings from the Christian building, 2010.



PLATE LVII The mithraeum at the time of excavation, showing cult reliefs and wall paintings, 1933–4.

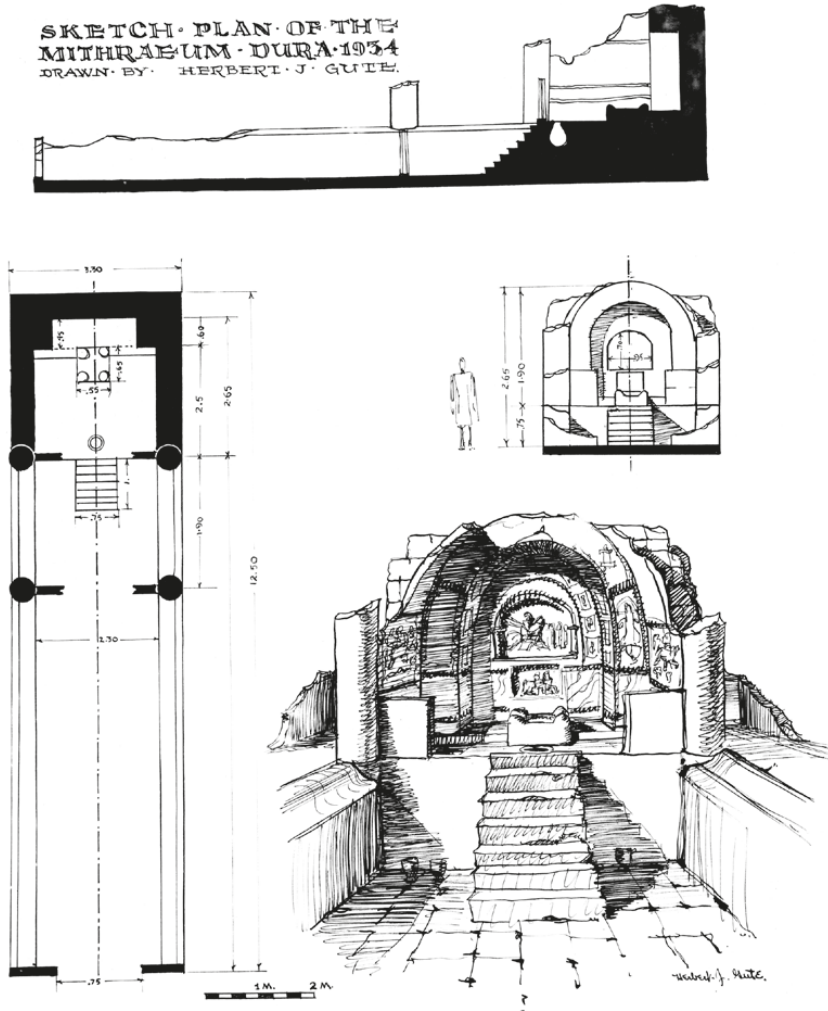


PLATE LVIII Sketch plan of the mithraeum by Herbert Gute, 1934.

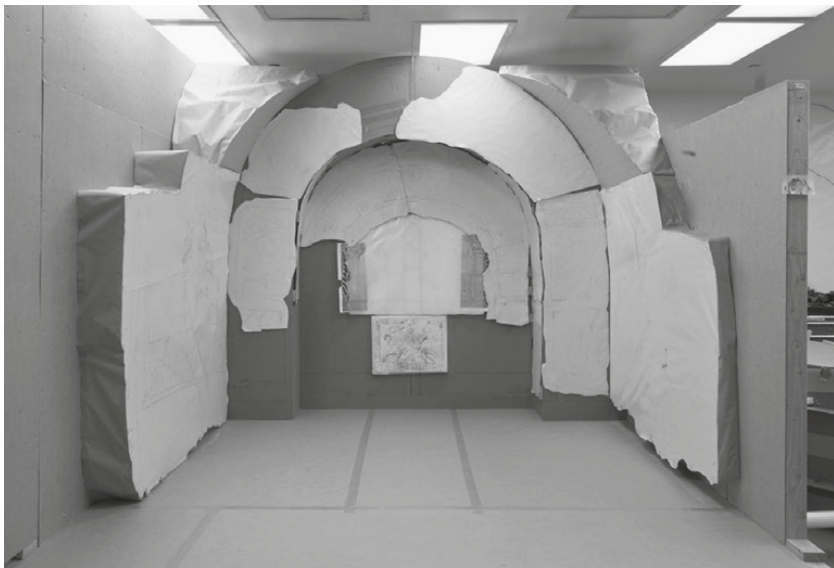


PLATE LIX Mock-up for new reconstruction of the mithraeum at Yale's West Campus, in preparation for reinstallation, 2010.



PLATE LX One of the sets of Roman horse-armor found in Tower 19, photographed on the back of a horse at the time of discovery, 1932–3. YUAG no. 1933.680.

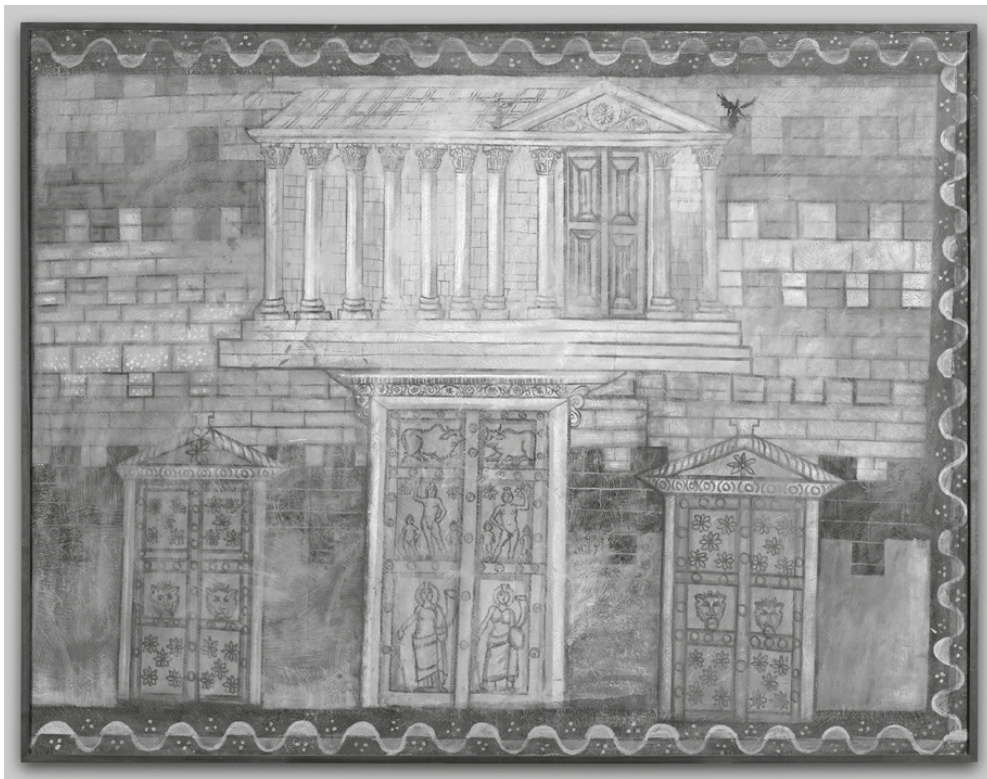


PLATE LXI Copy of wall painting from the west wall of the synagogue by Herbert Gute, 1933–5.



PLATE LXII View of the Classical Collection at the Yale University Art Gallery, with Gute's copies of the Dura-Europos synagogue paintings visible on the walls, 1941.

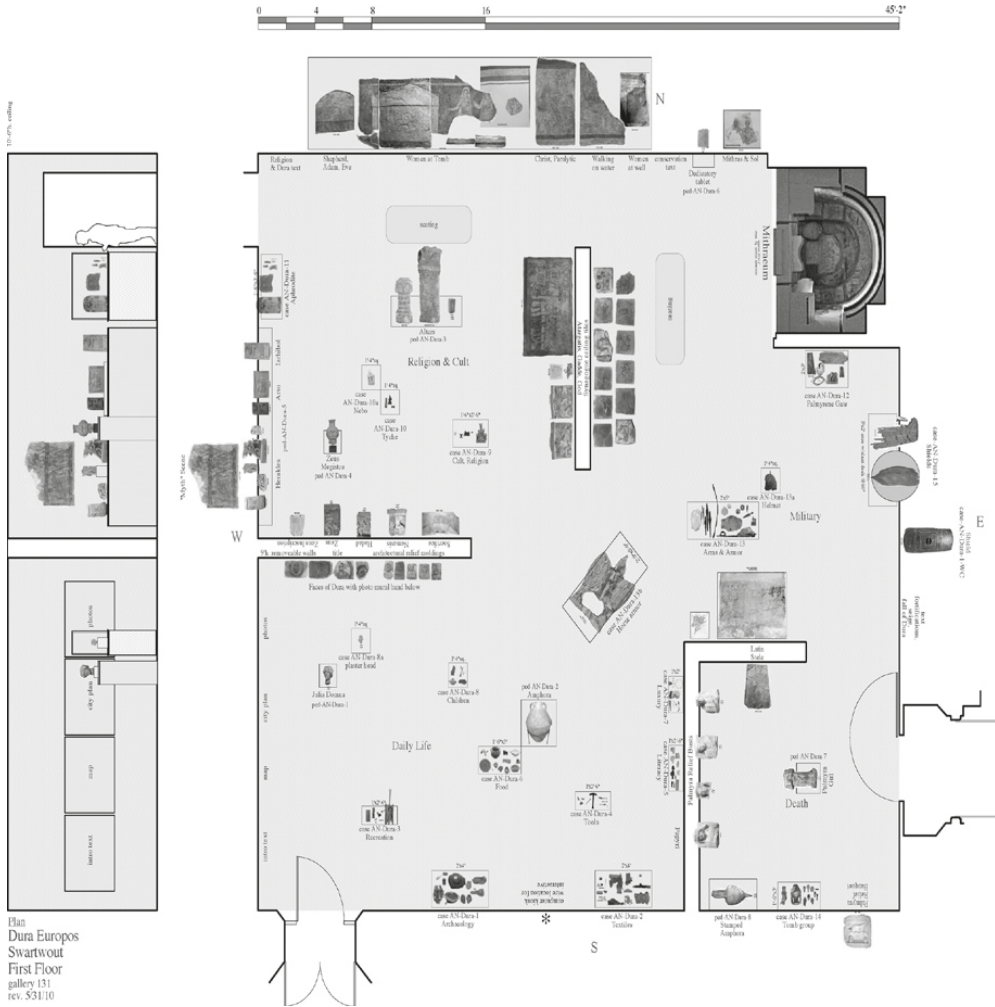


PLATE LXIV Working floor plan of the Dura-Europos gallery for the reinstallation of the Yale University Art Gallery in 2012.

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